

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

### ~~DELETIONS~~

### ADDITIONS

#### 900 Overview 900

900.1 The Urban Design Element addresses the District's physical design and visual qualities. The ~~Element~~ element describes the ways in which different aspects of the ~~District's~~ city's landscape, especially its buildings, streets, and open spaces, work together to define impressions of Washington, ~~DC~~ and its neighborhoods. The design and appearance of physical space can create connections or barriers. It can create a sense of safety or a sense of discomfort. Ultimately, urban design shapes perceptions of the ~~District~~ city, and contributes to the way people interact and experience the environment around them. 900.1

900.2 The critical urban design issues facing ~~the District of Columbia~~ Washington, DC are addressed in this element. These include:

- ~~Strengthening~~ Affirming civic identity through a ~~renewed~~ focus on the historic intention of the ~~our~~ District's design; ~~assets such as public spaces, boulevards, and waterfront areas~~
- ~~Strengthening~~ Designing for successful neighborhoods quality of life while and accommodating large site reintegration growth and change;
- Supporting a vibrant urban life that enhances the accessibility, performance, and beauty of public streets and spaces; and ~~and Improving the public realm, particularly street and sidewalk space~~
- Realizing design excellence and innovation in architecture, infrastructure, and public spaces to elevate the human experience of the built environment. Addressing infrastructure and other barriers that affect aesthetic qualities ~~900.2~~
- ~~Promoting design excellence throughout the city.~~ 900.2

900.3 ~~Urban design is important to all American cities but has particular significance and importance in the Nation's Capital. The city itself was designed to inspire American growth and prosperity. Streets were deliberately aligned to take advantage of natural topography and vistas, providing sites for monuments and important buildings and creating grand ceremonial spaces. The foundation of Washington, DC's design and character is based on continuous and deliberate planning to create a capital worthy of the nation. The streets, reservations, and vistas in the District's urban core collectively establish the historic L'Enfant City as the singular American example of a national capital conceived to physically express the ideals of a new republic. This historic~~

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

plan serves as a significant urban design framework that both the federal and District governments have extended through subsequent generations of planning and the development of a signature system of public parks, lushly landscaped streets, and architecturally rich neighborhoods and buildings. Deeply rooted in the District's form are also natural qualities like the topography, streams, waterways, and sweeping promontory views that continue to shape the human experience of Washington, DC in both subtle and formative ways. 900.3

900.4 ~~While great attention has been focused on the design of the monumental core of the city, its basic form has been set for many years. The same attention has not been consistently provided to the rest of Washington. Although the design of the built environment inspires civic pride and a strong sense of identity in some parts of the city, it has the opposite effect in others.~~ As a growing District, and to remain vital for future generations, Washington, DC should respond to the evolving needs of its residents, workers, and visitors and be cognizant of how technology and innovation are transforming the way people engage with the public realm and built landscape. The continued planning efforts by the federal and District governments will build upon the planning legacy by shaping the District's buildings, streets, and public spaces as places for people; celebrating the increasing diversity of people and institutions within the District; and elevating the nation's capital as a sustainable and resilient place. By weaving the everyday experiences of people and contemporary design into the District's historic plan, Washington, DC's national image will be elevated. 900.4

900.5 ~~There is more that can be done to enhance Washington's physical appearance. More of the city should benefit from the magnificent network of open spaces, waterfronts, and boulevards that is already in place. The traditional focus on the city's symbolic identity must be matched with a greater focus on its urban identity—its identity as a city of distinct and beautiful neighborhoods. A stronger policy foundation is needed to protect the positive qualities that distinguish each of Washington's communities while still allowing for innovative and creative design. The Urban Design Element includes diagrams to illustrate the principles suggested by its policies and actions. These diagrams are illustrative only.~~ 900.5

900.6 ~~5~~ Urban design objectives are interwoven throughout many of the Comprehensive Plan's ~~Elements~~ elements. In particular, the Land Use; Transportation; Environmental Protection; Historic Preservation; and Parks, Recreation, and Open Space ~~Elements~~ elements all speak to the role that design should play in shaping the future of the District. ~~city~~. The Comprehensive Plan as a whole recognizes the power of good design to transform and revitalize Washington, DC ~~the city~~ and its neighborhoods. The Urban Design Element includes diagrams to illustrate the principles suggested by its policies and actions. These diagrams are illustrative only. 900.6 ~~5~~

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

### 901 Urban Design Goal 901

901.1 The overarching goal for urban design in the District is: ~~to E~~ enhance the beauty, equity, and livability of Washington, DC ~~the city~~ by ~~reinforcing~~ protecting its historic design legacy ~~and, reinforcing~~ the diversity ~~identity~~ of its neighborhoods and centers, harmoniously integrating new construction with existing buildings and the natural environment, and improving the vitality, appearance, and function ~~security~~ of streets and public spaces. 901.1

### 902 UD-1 ~~Toward A Stronger~~ Shaping a Shared Civic Identity 902

902.1 Washington DC's civic identity is defined by a particular set of physical features, including the Potomac and Anacostia ~~Rivers~~ rivers, the topographic ~~“bowl”~~ around ~~of~~ the original city laid out by L’Enfant and the rolling hills beyond that surround it, the open spaces and dense tree canopy of its parks and neighborhoods, and the wide diagonal ~~boulevards~~ avenues, ~~and~~ rectangular street grids, and circles, squares, and triangular parks. The District ~~city~~ is further defined by its built form, which includes a horizontal skyline punctuated by civic landmarks, park-like streets, and pedestrian-scale architecture ~~The Virginia and Maryland suburbs contain the region’s tallest buildings while the city center is characterized by lower buildings of relatively uniform mass and height~~. 902.1

902.2 The character of the District’s ~~city~~ center has largely been shaped by the L’Enfant Plan, 19<sup>th</sup> century public space improvements, building height restrictions, and the McMillan Plan, ~~and the 1910 Height of Buildings Act.~~ The L’Enfant Plan in particular is responsible for the ~~set the stage for conditions that define almost every new development in the historic center of the city today.~~ The radial arrangement of streets, ~~and public spaces has created~~ wide streets, creation of signature views, distribution of public spaces, and many irregular and prominent building sites ~~The Height Act resulted in a predominance of structures that are as wide as they are tall, and a street environment, somewhat uniform, has more in common with Paris than it does with New York, Chicago, and other cities in North America.~~ Immediately beyond the District’s center, much of the Washington, DC urban pattern consists of walkable, compact communities within L’Enfant’s original grid of streets. A ring of more than a dozen well-defined neighborhoods lie within two miles of the edge of the National Mall and have the best features of traditional urbanism—housing near open space and transit, pedestrian-oriented shopping streets, and densities that create active street life. Beyond this ring, Washington, DC’s hills and valleys include many more neighborhoods that were shaped by the Olmsted Highway Plan and former streetcar lines; these neighborhoods are defined more by domestic-scale architecture, tree cover, and topography, and flank major gateways to the District. 902.2

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

- 902.3 ~~Beyond the city center, much of the District's urban pattern consists of walkable, compact communities. A ring of more than a dozen well-defined neighborhoods lie within two miles of the edge of the National Mall. Beyond this ring lie many more neighborhoods designed with the best features of traditional urbanism—housing near open space and transit, pedestrian-oriented shopping streets, and densities that create active street life. 902.3~~
- 902.4 ~~The design pattern in the city's outer neighborhoods is less formal than it is in the heart of the city. Their image is defined more by architecture, scale, tree cover, and topography than it is by monumental vistas. The neighborhoods contain a patchwork of building forms and styles spanning various periods in the city's history, from narrow townhouses to modernist towers. There are small traditional shopping districts, auto-oriented centers from the 1940s and 50s, occasional strip malls and even "big boxes" from more recent years. Many of the neighborhoods were initially shaped by streetcar lines, creating a radial pattern of development that extends far beyond the city limits. 902.4~~
- 902.53 ~~The impact of past urban design decisions has not all been positive. The urban renewal and freeway building efforts of the 1950s and '60s **resulted in physical barriers between many communities and the displacement of residents to other parts of the District.** ~~, in particular, contributed to some of the social and economic divisions that exist in the city today. For instance, "slum clearance" in the Near Southwest destroyed the fine-grained fabric of an entire neighborhood, and dislocated thousands of residents.~~ Future design decisions ~~must~~ **should** help to reconcile some of the inequities that persist in the District city and respond to the need to grow, changing the District's image from that of a divided city to one that is much more inclusive **and connected**. In this regard, ~~the~~ **reinforcing the design of Washington, DC's neighborhoods should** historic plan and access to natural features through exceptional urban design provides ~~even greater relevance~~ **opportunities for achieving a shared civic** identity ~~than the monuments themselves.~~ 902.53~~
- 902.64 ~~The text below is organized to respond to the following topics, each related to the urban pattern and identity of the District city as a whole:~~
- ~~Building on Washington, DC's Historic Plan~~ **Protecting the Integrity of Washington's Historic Plans;**
  - ~~Designing in Harmony with~~ **Natural Topography and Landforms;**
  - ~~Designing the Waterfront for the Next Century~~ **Identity and Design; and**
  - ~~Strengthening Boulevards~~ **Enhancing Thoroughfares** and Gateways.
  - ~~Overcoming Physical Barriers~~ 902.64



# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

### 903 UD-1.1 Building on ~~Protecting the Integrity of~~ Washington, DC's Historic Plan 903

903.1 ~~Washington's historic plans have proven to be extraordinarily resilient. The L'Enfant Plan has managed to accommodate the arrival of the streetcar, the subway, and most importantly, the automobile. In each case, elements of the original plan were altered and even transformed, but not at the expense of civic identity. The integrity of the District's historic plans has been regulated and protected through the careful oversight of agencies like the National Capital Planning Commission and the Commission of Fine Arts. NCPC's Legacy Plan (1997) and Memorials and Museums Plan (2001), in particular, have emphasized refinement and completion of many of the ideas originally proposed by L'Enfant and the McMillan Commission.~~

Washington, DC's historic plan is the backbone of the District's architectural identity and urban form. As a deliberately planned city, the notion of future growth was built into the original L'Enfant Plan in a way that was both visionary and aspirational, anticipating a grander place that would take years to construct and speaking to the promise of a great nation. It would take over a century for the District's population to reach 500,000 and begin to take on the monumental scale of the original vision. With the additional layers of the McMillan Plan, Olmsted Highway Plan, and various other planning initiatives, Washington's urban form has proven to be both resilient at accommodating many of the changing physical and programmatic needs and demands of urban life. 903.1

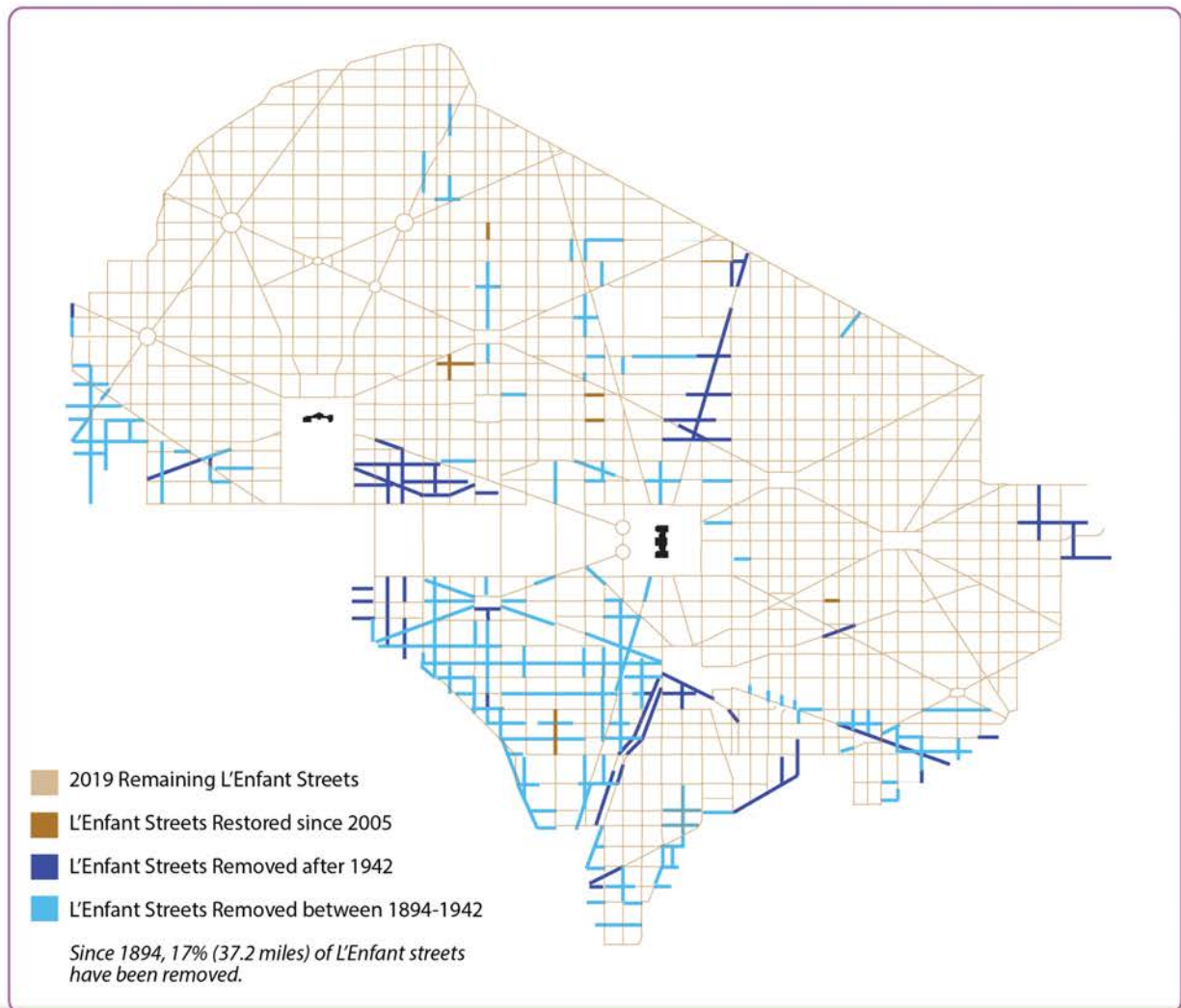
903.2 ~~Protection of historic plans and a commitment to their underlying principles should extend across and beyond the monumental core of the city. Design decisions should reinforce the city's pattern of axial, radial, and diagonal streets, and enhance the public spaces formed where these streets intersect one another (see Figure 9.1). Special places such as Mount Vernon Square and Judiciary Square should be highlighted through landscape improvements and building frontage requirements. L'Enfant's 1791 plan for the City of Washington, with its generous rights-of-ways and network of parks and open spaces, has managed to incorporate, with varying degrees of success, the streetcar, the Metro, the automobile, bike lanes, security requirements, and other evolving layers of urban infrastructure. However, parts of the original plan have been altered and even transformed to accommodate change. Since 1896, 17 percent of the streets in the original L'Enfant Plan (as shown in Figure 9.1) are gone. Over the last 15 years, greater stewardship of the planning legacy has led to the reversal of some of these losses through projects like CityCenterDC and Waterfront Station. So far, approximately 1.7 miles of the original L'Enfant streets have been restored.~~ 903.2

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

**903.3**

**Figure 9.1: L'Enfant Streets Over Time 903.3**



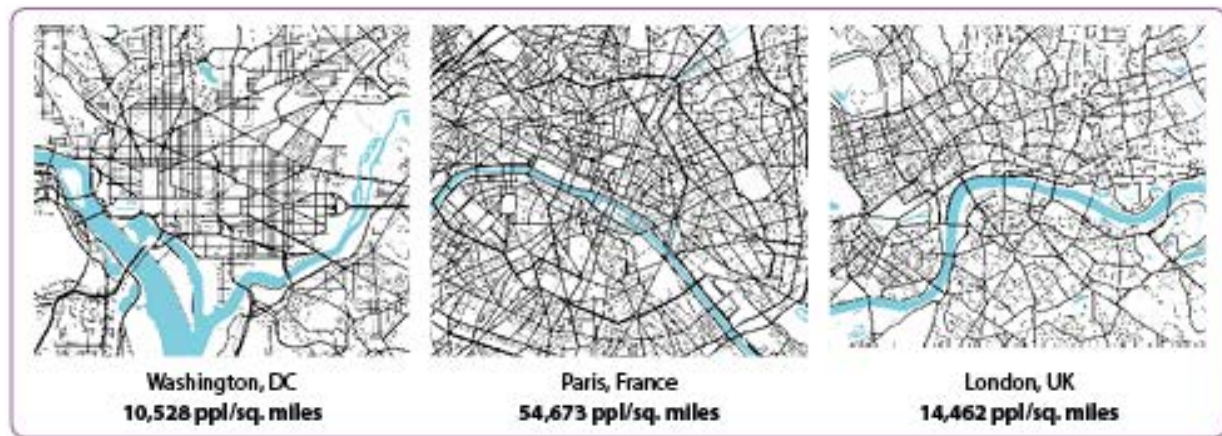
~~The integrity of the District's historic plans has been regulated, refined and updated through agency oversight and planning efforts such as NCPC's Legacy Plan (1997) and Memorials and Museums Plan (2001). The more recent Anacostia Waterfront Initiative (2003) has continued this evolution, but with a distinct shift in focus towards environmental stewardship and the realization of a waterfront city. In this instance, the Anacostia River and its surrounding neighborhoods have been re-envisioned as a place that meets the needs of a growing city by leveraging a new relationship between the city's natural features and its built form.~~

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

**903.4** The District should continue to balance the need to preserve and honor Washington, DC's distinctive urban and monumental heritage with the pressing needs of a growing population, equity, and long-term resilience. Looking at the strategies other historic capital cities have used to grow sustainably shows that, by respecting and building on these plans, greater density and careful incorporation of taller structures are possible (see Figure 9.2). A commitment to the design concepts and underlying principles of L'Enfant's 1791 plan for the City of Washington should underpin this growth and extend across and beyond the monumental core of the District with design decisions that reinforce the plan's pattern of axial, radial, and diagonal streets; enhance the public spaces formed where these streets intersect one another; and build fine-grained character in the alley system (see Figure 9.3). Finally, the approach to urban design should allow for 21<sup>st</sup> century realities and aspirations: equitable access, a renewed District identity, and sustainable design are just a handful of the factors giving shape to this vision and forming the backdrop for the public life and cultural engagement of all residents. 903.4

**903.35** ~~Figure 9.1: Typical DC Irregular Spaces~~ Figure 9.2: Scaled Capital City Comparison 903.35



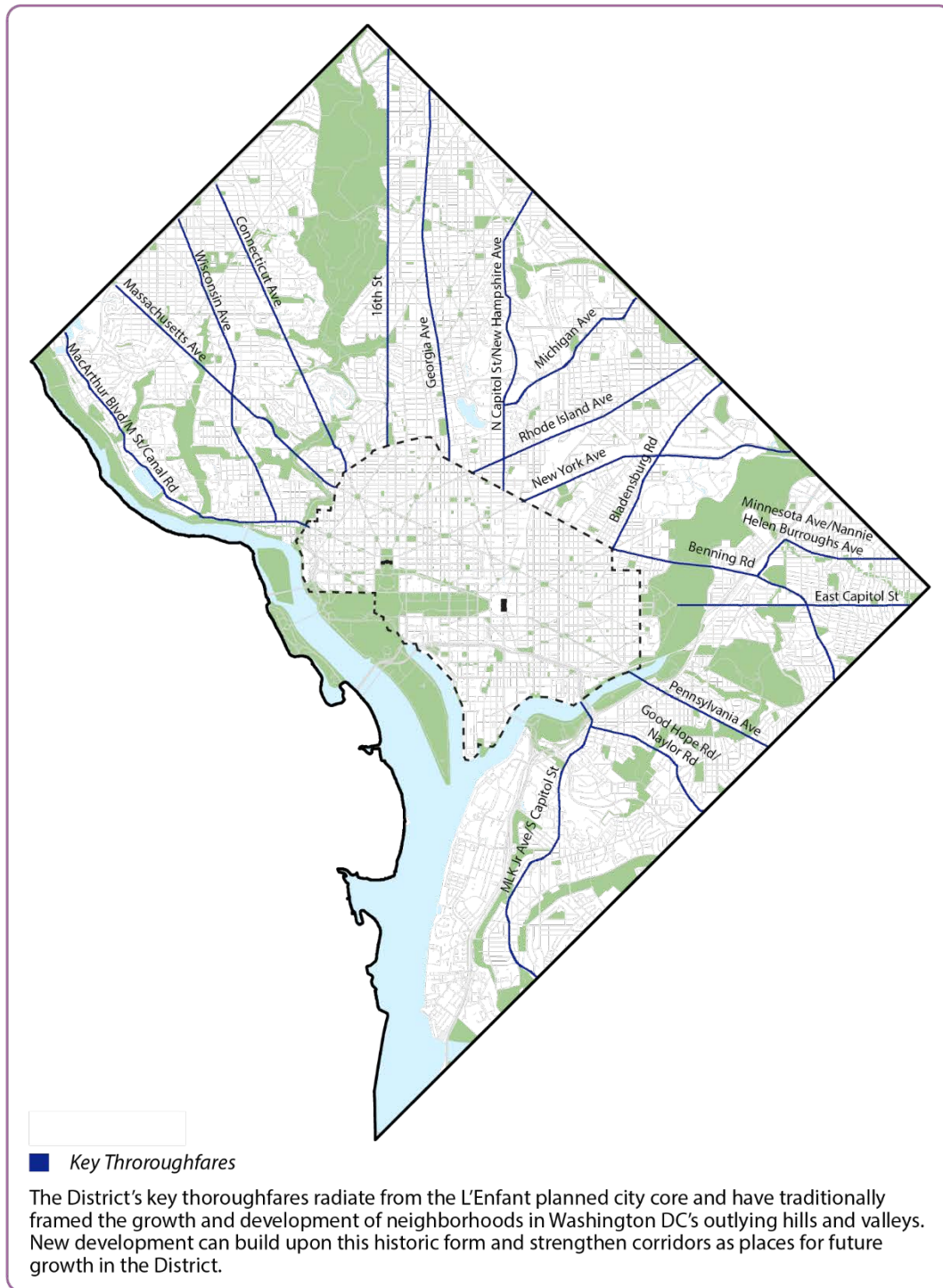
**903.4** ~~Figure 9.2: Plan of L'Enfant Reservations (excerpt only)~~

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

**903.6**

**Figure 9.3: Key Thoroughfares 903.6**



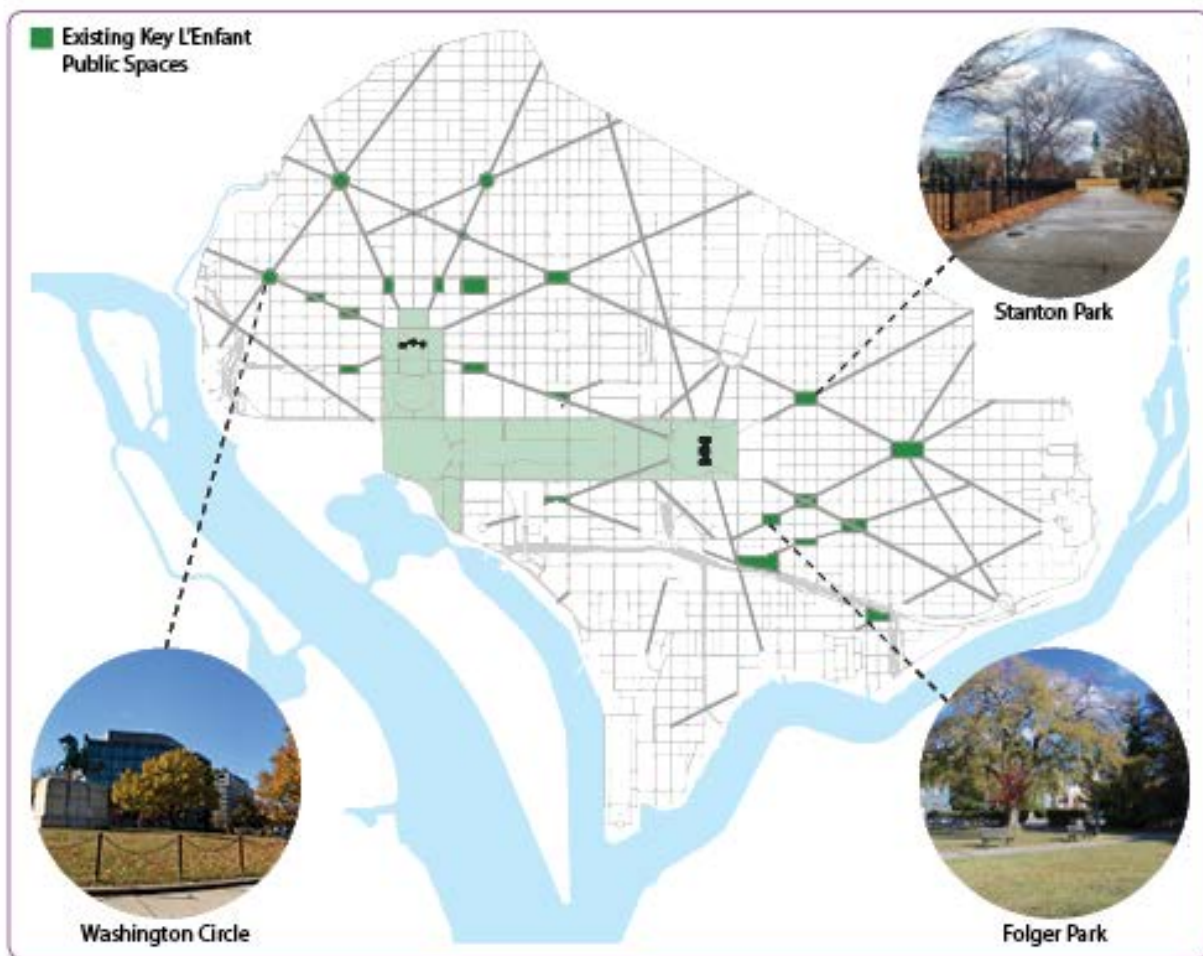


# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

903.57 Many of the District's public squares, circles, triangles, and public "reservations" (see Figure 9.24) are undervalued and lack distinction. ~~The~~ **They comprise a great design opportunity for the** District, ~~should~~ to work with the National Park Service (NPS) and others to enhance these ~~reservations~~ places as distinctive elements of the cityscape and important legacies of the earlier plans. Building placement **is key to** ~~should~~ reinforcing the ~~identity~~ **physical presence** of the **District's** ~~city's~~ corridors **and open spaces** and **to emphasizing** ~~avoid obstruction~~ of important vistas. 903.57

**903.8** **Figure 9.4: Key L'Enfant Public Spaces 903.8**



903.6 **Policy UD-1.1.1: National Image**  
Strengthen and enhance the physical image, character and outstanding physical qualities of the District, its neighborhoods, and its open spaces, in a manner that reflects its role as the national capital. 903.6

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

903.79 **Policy UD-1.1.1: Reinforcing ~~the~~ L'Enfant's 1791 plan for the City of Washington ~~L'Enfant and McMillan~~ Olmsted Highway Plans**  
**Respect** ~~Preserve~~ and reinforce the **Plan of the City of Washington** ~~L'Enfant~~, and **Olmsted Highway Plans** ~~plans~~ **to maintain the District's unique, and historic and grand character, such as the grand avenues and connections to nature.** This policy should be achieved through a variety of urban design measures, including **restoration of previously closed streets,** appropriate building placement, view **preservation** ~~protection~~, enhancement of L'Enfant Plan reservations (green spaces), limits on street and alley closings ~~(see Figure 9.3),~~ and the siting of new monuments and memorials in locations of visual prominence. Restore **obstructed view corridors and vistas, where contributing to a historic resource** ~~as appropriate~~ and where possible, ~~previously closed streets and alleys, and obstructed vistas or viewsheds.~~ 903.79

903.8 ~~Figure 9.3: Discouraging Alley and Street Closings Within the L'Enfant Plan Area~~

903.10 **Policy UD-1.1.2: Preeminent View Corridors**  
**Reinforce the prominent role of views as a defining feature of the District's character through careful planning of streetscapes and public parks to preserve and frame views of existing landmarks and significant structures and through consideration of the various types of view corridors when designing and planning public projects and streetscapes. Such views could include, preeminent views of nationally symbolic architecture, important views of nationally or locally significant civic structures, landmarks, and parks and open spaces. (see Figure 9.5).** 903.10



# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

**903.11**

**Figure 9.5: View Corridors within L’Enfant’s 1791 plan for the City of Washington 903.11**



# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

- 903.912 ***Policy UD-1.1.32: Siting and Design of Museums, Monuments, and Memorials***  
~~Coordinate with federal entities such as the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) and the Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) in the planning and siting of major landmarks, including museums, monuments, and memorials, the development of plans for federal reservations and other federally owned civic spaces~~  
**Locate commemorative works in places that are relevant to the subject being memorialized, where possible. Design commemorative installations to be accessible to people of all ages and various degrees of mobility, and design them in a way that benefits public life. Explore new types of commemoration, including temporary installations.** 903.912
- 903.10 ~~Policy UD-1.1.4: Height Act of 1910~~  
~~Protect the civic and historical character of the city, particularly the “horizontal” urban quality of Central Washington, by limiting building heights in accordance with the Height Act of 1910. Basic principles of the Height Act are shown in Figure 9.4.~~ 903.10
- 903.13 ***Policy UD-1.1.3: Inclusive and Vibrant Civic Spaces***  
**Enhance L’Enfant Plan reservations and other historic open spaces as key gathering and civic spaces of Washington, DC through redesign and programming to attract a diversity of users, enhance user experience, and foster national and local identity. Design the visual qualities of the public spaces to reinforce the District’s grand civic character, as well as its creative culture.**
- 903.14 ***Policy UD-1.1.4: Public Space Landscape***  
**Continue and enhance the use of public parking regulations (see Figure 9.6) to promote a verdant park-like character of the District’s streets, with landscaped yards, generous tree canopy, and pedestrian-scaled retaining walls and fences. Maintain building restriction lines, limit below-grade building projections that detract from green space, and preserve the existing grades along a block or corridor in public space and building restriction areas.** 903.14

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

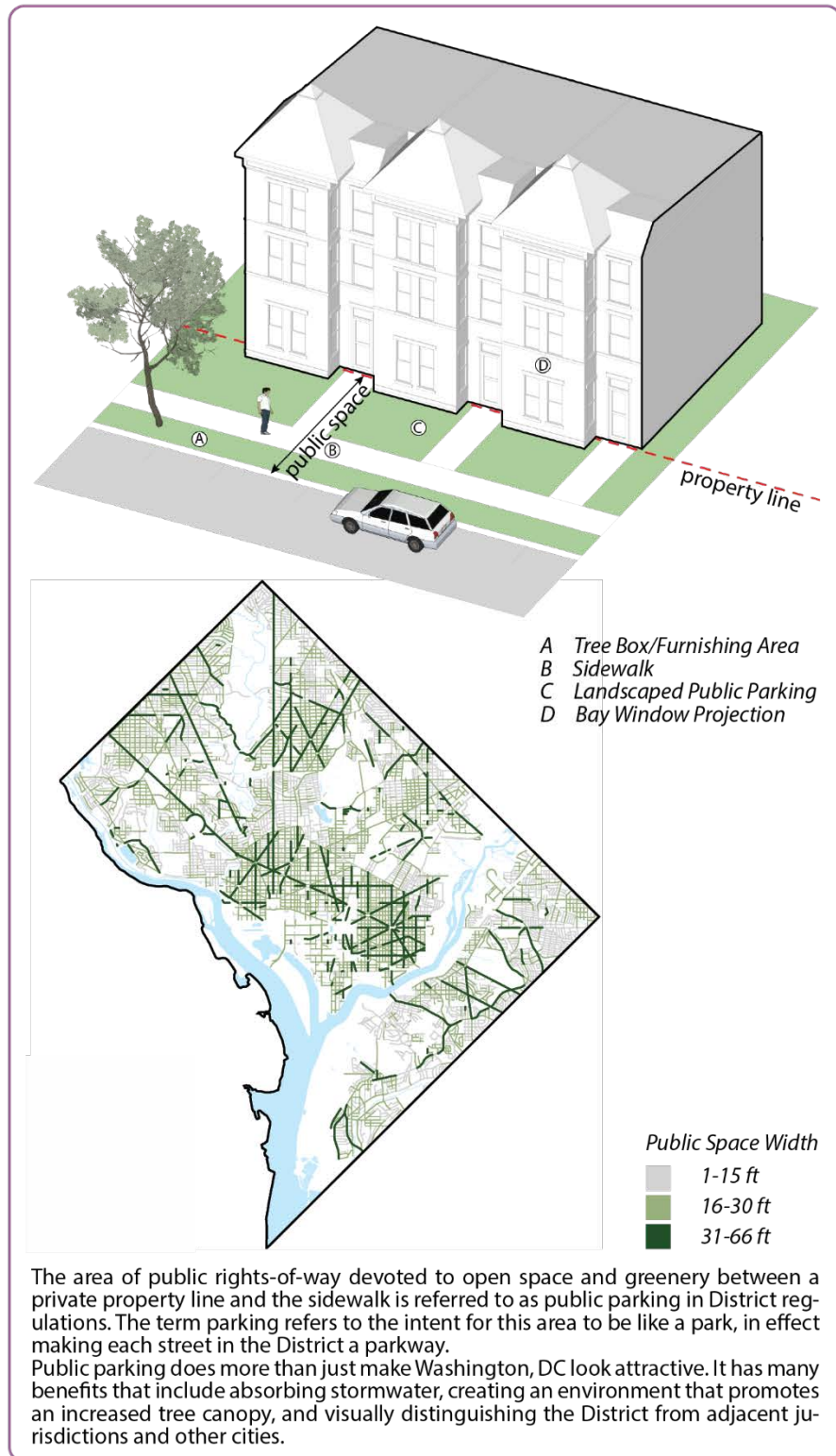
## Proposed Amendments

**903.15**

**Figure 9.6: Streets with Public Parking 903.15**

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments



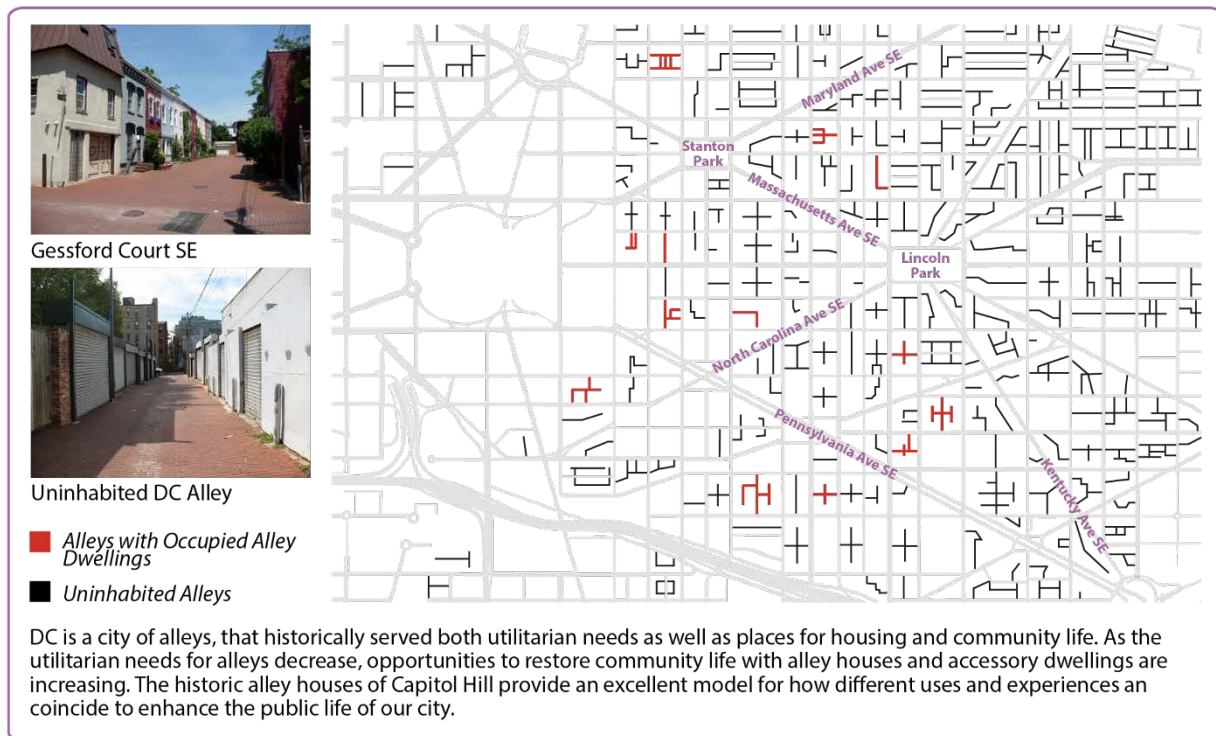
# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

**Promote the use of the historic alleyway systems as multipurpose spaces that meet utilitarian needs and can provide additional housing, and support community life, and meet utilitarian needs through the creation of dwelling units, green alley treatments, and controlled vehicular access . Strongly discourage the closure of alleyways for whole block development. 903.16**

**903.17**

**Figure 9.7: Community Life of Alleys 903.17**



**903.18**

**Policy UD-1.1.6: Reducing Railroad and Highway Barriers**

**Upgrade or rebuild railroad and highway overpasses and underpasses to maintain or restore the continuity of the historic street network for the comfort and safety of pedestrians and bicyclists. In appropriate settings, such as Central Washington, explore longer-term solutions to addressing railroad and highway barriers, such as air rights development over tracks, sunken freeways, or conversion into boulevards. 903.18**

**903.19**

**Action UD-1.1.A: Siting of ~~Landmarks~~ Commemorative Works**

**Enhance the District government's approach to the siting and review of both local and national commemorative works, and establish processes for better coordination among District and federal agencies and review bodies; develop a District-wide master plan for creating commemorative sculptures and**



# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

~~events throughout Washington, DC. Continue to convene a Commemorative Works Committee to advise and make recommendations to the Mayor and Council on requests to place monuments, memorials, and other commemorative works on District-owned space. Work with NCPC, the CFA, and other federal partners to ensure that the placement of such works on federal properties is consistent with the NCPC Monuments and Memorials Plan. 903.1119~~

**903.20**

*Action UD-1.1.B: Review of Public Parking Regulations*

**Conduct a review of public space regulations and standards. Update and refine the design standards for public parking areas, including appropriate materials for curbs, fences, and retaining walls. In addition, develop regulations to promote tree planting in areas without street trees. 903.20**

**903.21**

*Action UD-1.1.C: Alley Greening*

**Investigate the adoption of regulations that allow for resident greening and controlled vehicular access of alleyways to promote neighborhood community life. 903.21**

**903.22**

*Action UD-1.1.D: District-Wide Urban Design Vision*

**Produce a District-wide urban design vision that facilitates equitable and sustainable growth. The vision should elevate the quality of new building architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design, while conserving essential elements of Washington, DC's traditional physical character. The vision should also strengthen District-wide systems, such as infrastructure, housing, and transportation to address contemporary community needs and improve the quality of life for all residents. 903.22**

**903.23**

*Action UD-1.1.E: View Corridor Study and Guidelines*

**Conduct a study, in coordination with the National Capital Planning Commission, to document existing public view corridors and codify their typologies; and develop design guidance for preserving and enhancing them to strengthen views and improve the pedestrian experience. 903.23**

**903.24**

*Action UD-1.1.F: Small Open Spaces Inventory and Design Guidelines*

**Document the existing small open spaces and reservations, under both federal and District-control and, develop guidelines for restoring greenspace and enhancing their usability as recreation and community spaces. 903.24**

**903.12**

~~Figure 9.4: Street Sections Indicating Height Act Regulations 903.12~~



# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

### 904 UD-1.2 Designing in Harmony with ~~Respecting~~ Natural Topography and Landforms 904

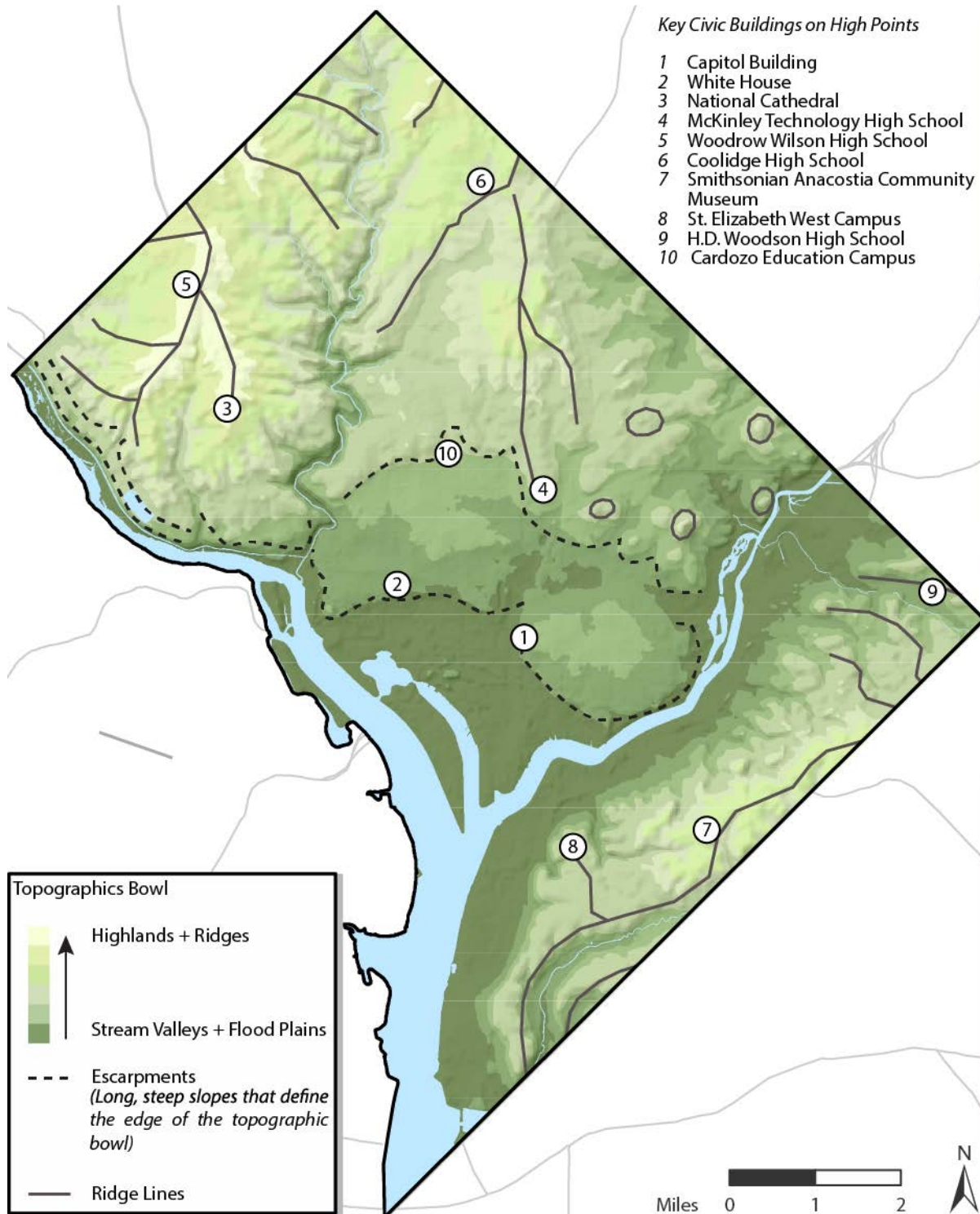
904.1 The escarpments, ridges, hills, plateaus, rivers, and streams of ~~the District of Columbia~~ Washington, DC's topography are major components of the District's ~~city's~~ identity. They shape neighborhoods and parks as well as essential elements of the District's skyline, as shown in Map 9.1~~identity~~. This is particularly true ~~in the~~ for framing views of iconic buildings in the L'Enfant City. Natural features are also important for neighborhoods located on the hills, slopes, and ridges beyond the L'Enfant City, city where. ~~The terrain creates a variety of views to, from, and in some instances, between significant resources. Views range from the natural features frame views of grand prospects toward the Capitol building, panoramic vistas of the District from high elevations like Fort Reno, to and the more intimate views of street-level views of~~ forested parks and stream valleys in many neighborhoods in Wards 7 and 8 ~~east of the Anacostia River~~ and in Northwest DC. 904.1

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

**904.2**

**Map 9.1: Topographic Bowl 904.2**



# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

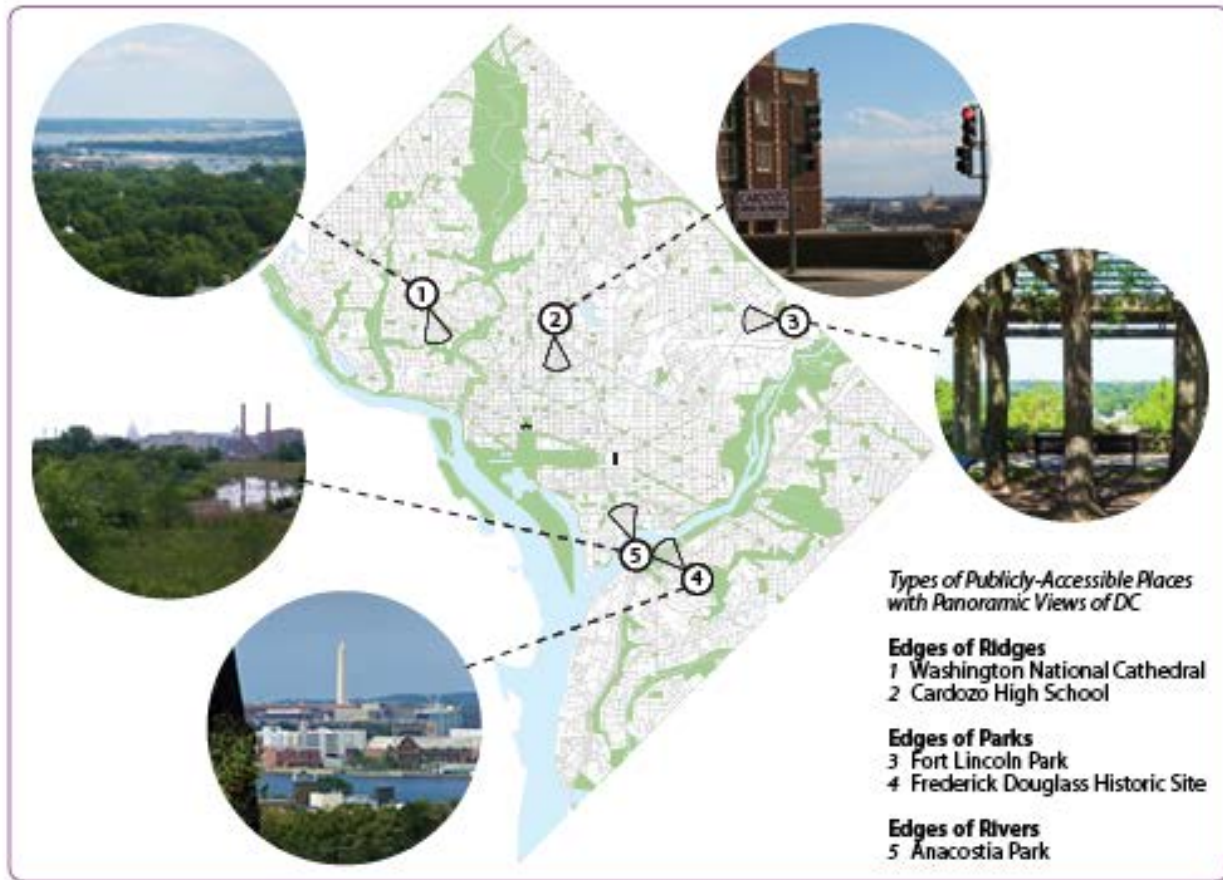
- 904.2 ~~In many American cities, natural form has been destroyed through grading, rerouting of rivers, and clear cutting of forests. Not so in Washington. As Map 9.1 indicates, many of the city's prominent natural features remain intact today and are of the District's skyline. 904.2~~
- 904.3 ***Policy UD-1.2.1: Respecting Natural Features in Development***  
Respect and perpetuate the natural features of Washington, DC's landscape as part of new development. In ~~low density~~, wooded or hilly areas, new construction should preserve natural features rather than altering them to accommodate development. Density in such areas should be ~~limited~~ clustered to protect topography and ~~setbacks should be~~ provided setbacks as needed to protect natural features, such as large trees, rock outcroppings, streams, and wetlands. ~~Where appropriate, clustering of development should be considered as a way to protect natural resources. 904.3~~
- 904.4 ***Policy UD-1.2.2: Protecting the Topographic "Bowl"***  
Consistent with the ~~Federal~~ federal ~~Elements~~ elements of the Comprehensive Plan, maintain the prominence of the topographic bowl formed by lowland and rim features of the L'Enfant City~~city~~ (see text box). This protective effort should include preserving the green setting of the Anacostia hills and maintaining the visual prominence of the Florida Avenue escarpment. 904.4
- 904.5 ***Policy UD-1.2.3: Ridgeline Protection***  
~~Protect~~ Maintain views of prominent ridgelines from the monumental core, and enhance them with civic structures to elevate their role shaping the ~~so as to maintain and enhance the~~ District's physical image and identity ~~horizontal skyline. 904.5~~
- 904.6 ***Policy UD-1.2.4: Significant View Protection***  
Recognize and protect ~~major~~ significant views within the District, ~~city~~, particularly characteristic views of ~~city~~ landmarks, and views from important vantage points (as shown in Figure 9.8). Recognize the importance of views to the quality of life in the District ~~city~~ and the identity of Washington, DC and its neighborhoods. 904.6

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

904.7

**Figure 9.8: Key Public Places with Panoramic Views 904.7**



904.78

### **The Topographic Bowl and City Plan**

The historic center of Washington, **DC** occupies a low-lying “bowl” of river flats formed by the junction of the Potomac and Anacostia **r**Rivers. The bowl is surrounded by a ring of hills, ridges, and upland areas.

The flat topography of the area within the original L’Enfant **city** **City** lends itself to radial boulevards terminating on monuments or far-reaching vistas. Such geometric road patterns would have been less effective on rolling hills. In outlying areas, where the topography is more varied, important landmarks are often closely related to features of the natural setting. The National Cathedral, for example, is sited on one of the highest ridgelines in the District, affording great visibility of the structure from many points in **Washington, DC** **the city** and beyond. Similar promontories exist **in Wards 7 and 8** **east of the Anacostia River** on sites such as St. Elizabeth’s Hospital and along the **Civil War Defenses of Washington, DC, also known as the Fort Circle Parks. As the District continues to develop, new soaring features may be built, contributing to Washington, DC’s varied and dramatic vistas.** 904.78

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

- 904.8 ~~Map 9.1: Prominent Topographic Features of Washington~~
- 904.9 ~~Action UD-1.2.A: Review of Zoning Designations~~  
~~Conduct a review of zoning designations in environmentally sensitive areas, including wetlands, riparian areas and upland areas along stream valleys, steep slopes, and areas of soil instability to identify areas where current zoning may permit excessive density, given site constraints. Recommend zoning changes and/or overlay designations as necessary to protect these areas. 904.9~~ **Completed**  
**– See Implementation Table.**
- 904.9** *Action UD-1.2.A: Public Space Regulations for Grading*  
**Conduct a review of public space regulations and standards to assess limits and design requirements for protecting natural landforms, including changes to grade, retaining walls, fences, and landscaping. Recommend changes to these regulations as necessary to respect and enhance view corridors and the natural topography and landform. 904.9**
- 904.10 *Action UD-1.2.B: Creating View Plane Regulations*  
Conduct a ~~review~~**study** of ~~desirable~~**significant** views **from key public spaces in the District, in coordination with the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC). Identify public view locations, key components that define them, and recommendations for protecting and enhancing them. Create**~~creating~~ view plane diagrams **and design guidelines.**~~, affording analysis of desired possibilities, and developing zoning regulations accordingly.~~ 904.10
- 905 **UD-1.3 Designing ~~Our~~ Improving the Waterfront for the Next Century Identity And Design**
- 905.1 ~~Although the confluence of the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers determined its location, Washington is not thought of as a waterfront city in the same way that Chicago is identified with its lake, New York with its harbor, or San Francisco with its Bay. The confluence of the Potomac and Anacostia rivers determined Washington, DC's location, contributing to the design and orientation of the Mall, monuments, central federal institutions, and original port settlements. Subsequently, The city's connections to the water have been eroded the development of industry,~~ the construction of railroads and highways, and the reservation of much of the shoreline for military and other federal uses eroded the **District's** ~~city's~~ connection to the water. **Restoring an urban design emphasis that embraces and reestablishes access to the water is key to strengthening the District's civic identity. Over the last 15 years, both the Potomac and Anacostia rivers have seen dramatic progress toward connected, accessible waterfronts, with destination public spaces such as the Yards Park, the Wharf promenade, and Georgetown Park; a renewed connection to riparian ecology through the Anacostia Riverwalk Trail system and the restoration of**



# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

**Kingman Island; and the redevelopment of new and existing neighborhoods, including Historic Anacostia, Capitol Riverfront/Navy Yard, Southwest Waterfront, and Buzzard Point.** ~~The Potomac River is graced with many outdoor recreational amenities but is more connected to the National Mall than it is to the city's neighborhoods. The Anacostia River, meanwhile, is almost invisible to the motorists who drive across it and is difficult to access from the neighborhoods it abuts.~~ 905.1

905.2 ~~There are certainly successful urban waterfront areas in the District. Georgetown's Washington Harbour is lively and crowded, and the Washington Channel is lined with marinas, restaurants, and fish vendors. But these areas represent a fraction of what might be, given the miles of shoreline within District boundaries.~~ **Realizing a waterfront that is diverse, resilient, and integrated with established neighborhoods requires continued effort. Providing equitable access to the waterfront is a particularly vital challenge. Currently, 30 percent of the Potomac and 31 percent of the Anacostia shorelines lack riverfront trails, and only 22 percent of streets physically connect to the water's edge or waterfront public spaces, leaving many low-income neighborhoods along the Anacostia with sparse access to the river (as shown in Figure 9.9).** 905.2

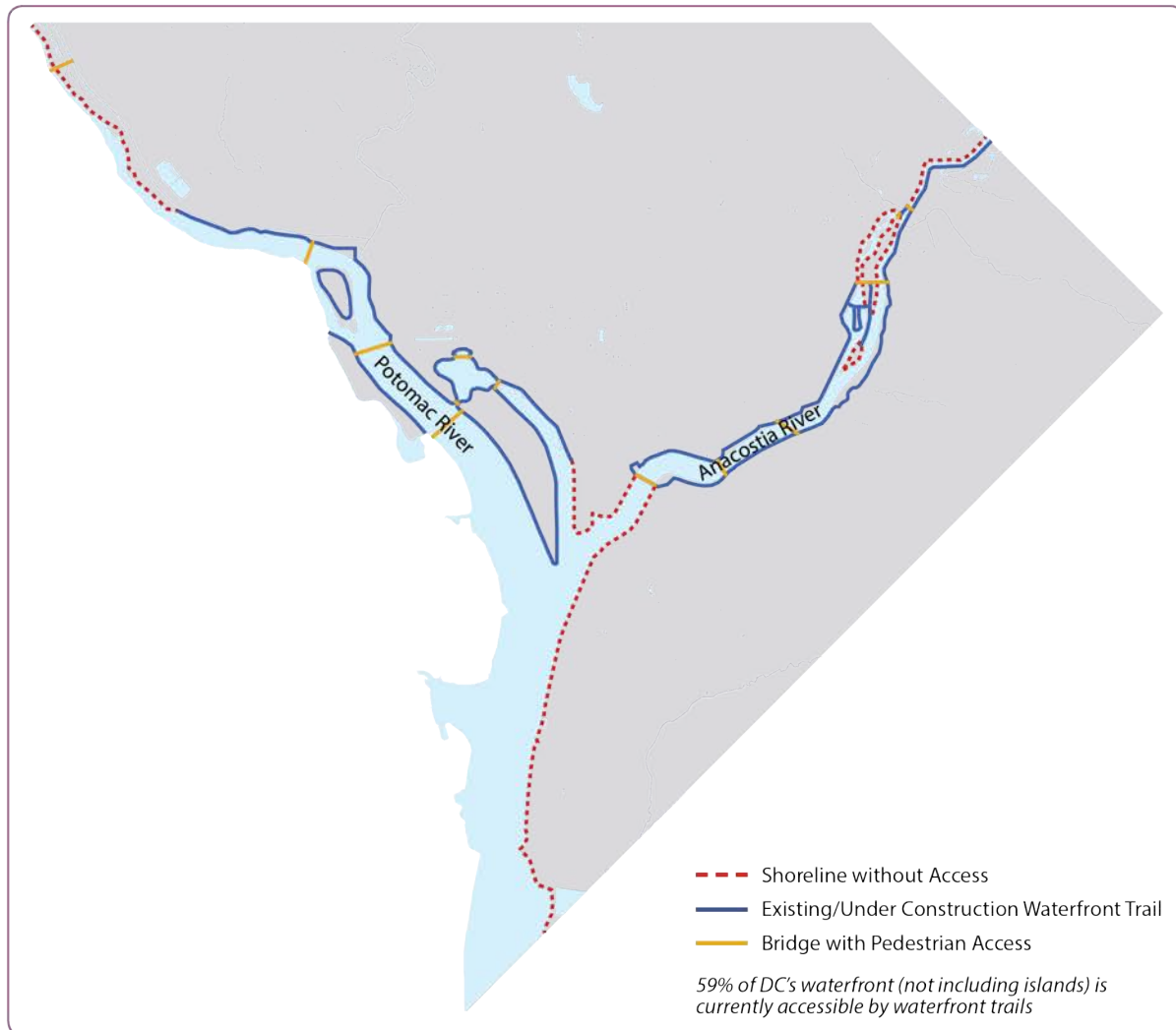


# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

**905.3**

**Figure 9.9: Waterfront Trails and Shoreline Access 905.3**



**905.4**

**Continuing the revitalization of the waterfront also means managing the growing challenges of coastal flooding, riverine flooding, and storm surge that threaten development along the waterfront as well as interior low-lying areas and areas developed along stream valleys. By 2080, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers predict up to 3.4 feet of additional sea level rise in Washington, DC. These trends threaten not only completed Anacostia waterfront development but also projects underway and planned in areas such as Poplar Point. Resilient and climate-adaptive design will be necessary to protect people and infrastructure in sensitive areas.** 905.24

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

905.3 ~~Today, there is an unprecedented opportunity to refocus DC's future civic identity along its "forgotten" and poorly linked waterfronts. With their expansive view corridors and natural backdrops, the waterfronts along the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers, as well as the Washington Channel, offer unique settings that are especially appropriate for great public spaces. As new parks and public spaces are created, missing links in the waterfront park system can finally be closed, and the river can be reintegrated back into the very neighborhoods it now divides. 905.3~~

905.4 ~~Perhaps the greatest opportunity to bolster Washington's identity as a waterfront city lies in the proposed redevelopment of the Anacostia shoreline. Good urban design is vital to the success of this transformation. New waterfront buildings should be appropriately related to each other, the water's edge, and adjacent neighborhoods. The creation of view corridors and enhancement of existing views to the water are particularly important. Likewise, the development of new and/or enhanced public gathering spaces along each of the city's waterfronts, as well as waterfront parks and plazas, boathouses and fishing piers, is essential. 905.4~~

905.5 ***Policy UD-1.3.1: ~~DC as a Waterfront City~~Diverse Waterfront Experiences along the Anacostia River***

Strengthen Washington, DC's civic identity as a waterfront city by promoting public and private investment along the Anacostia River waterfront and creating equitable and publicly accessible amenities for existing and new residents. ~~creating new water-related parks, improving~~ Design a mix of new public parks and other natural areas to provide diverse waterfront experiences and help residents use the water as a community asset through programming and recreational amenities. Create continuous public access along both sides of the shoreline, integrate historic features and structures into new developments, ~~incorporation and~~ preserve or restore habitat areas, and implement other design interventions to ~~improving~~ improve the physical and visual connections between the waterfront and adjacent neighborhoods. 905.5

905.6 ***Policy UD-1.3.2: Waterfront Public Space~~and Access~~***

Develop public gathering spaces along the Potomac and Anacostia waterfronts, including promenades, viewpoints, boating and swimming facilities, and parks. Such space should be designed to promote continuous public access along the rivers; and to take full advantage of site topography and waterfront views. Design treatments should vary from "hardscape" plazas in urban settings to ~~softer greener, more passive~~ open spaces that are more natural in character and provide access to outdoor recreation. Encourage the density and mix of land uses that enliven waterfront sites with pedestrian activity, provide a sense of safety, create visual interest, and draw people to the water. 905.6

*See also the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Element and the Lower Anacostia Waterfront/Near Southwest Area Element for additional actions and*

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

*policies related to providing continuous public access to the water's edge and removing barriers to waterfront access.*

905.7

***Policy UD-1.3.3: ~~Excellence in~~ Innovative and Resilient Waterfront Design Development***

~~Require a high standard of design for all waterfront projects, with an emphasis on shoreline access, integration of historic features and structures, an orientation toward the water, and the creation of new water-oriented public amenities~~**The design of new waterfront development projects should respond to the unique opportunities and challenges of being on the water. Incorporate nature-based design and flood-resilient building and site design methods. Utilize bold and innovative architecture to create a range of building forms that express contemporary needs. New buildings should be carefully designed to consider their appearance from multiple public vantage points along the Anacostia and Potomac shorelines, including from the shoreline and from the water.**

905.7

905.8

***Policy UD-1.3.4: ~~Design Character of~~ Resilient Waterfront Sites***

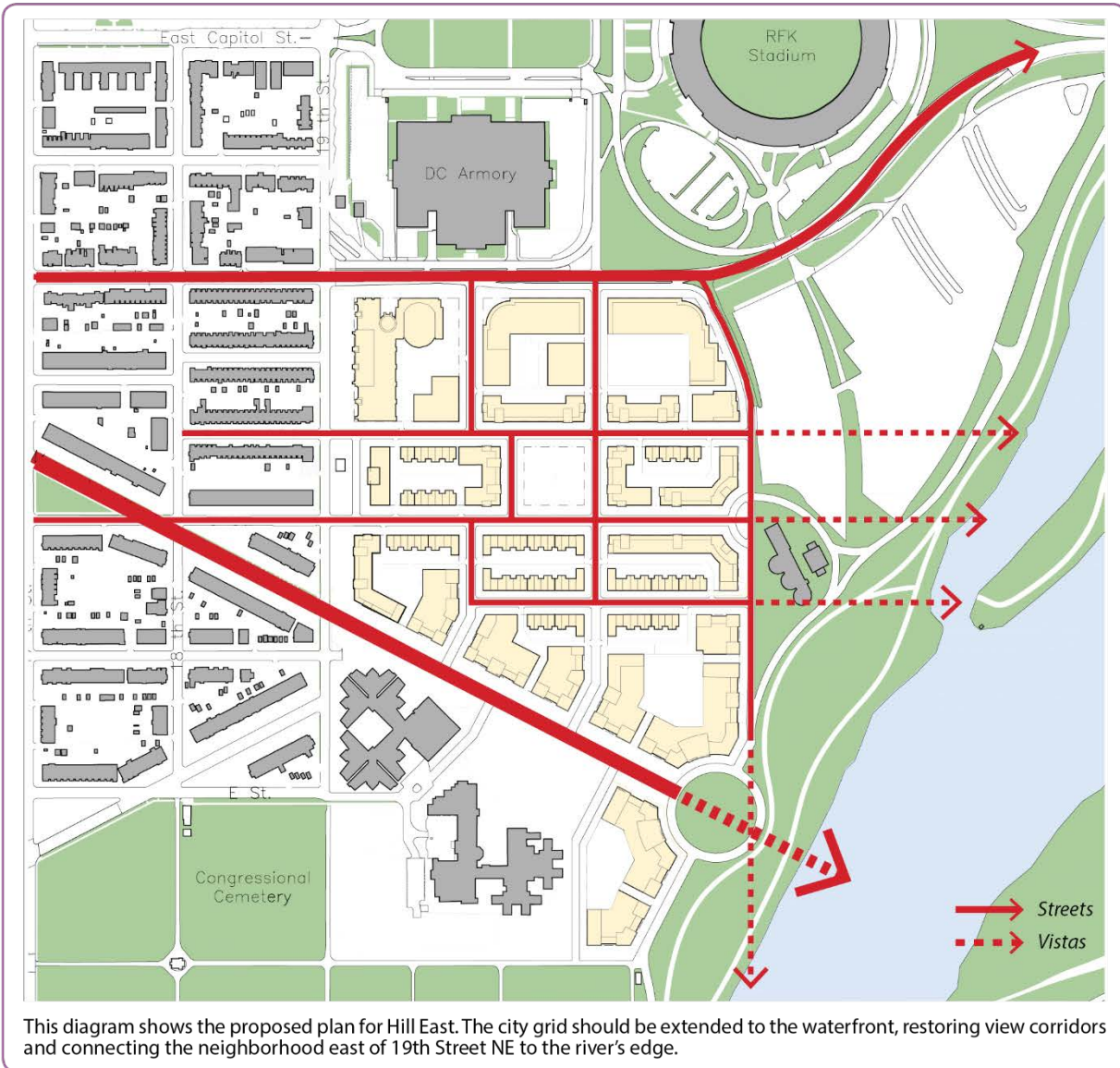
~~Ensure that t~~**The design of each waterfront site should work with the natural processes of tidal rivers to be more resilient to flooding due to storm surge, sea level rise, and land subsidence. Design architecture, transportation infrastructure, outdoor spaces, and shorelines to accommodate and mitigate flooding and to leverage and restore ecological systems and natural shorelines**~~responds to its unique natural qualities. A range of building forms should be created, responding to the range of physical conditions present. New buildings should be carefully designed to consider their appearance from multiple vantage points, both in the site vicinity and at various points on the horizon.~~

905.8

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

- 905.9      Figure 9.510: ~~Discouraged and Encouraged Preservation of River View Corridors in Waterfront Development~~ Extending Neighborhood Street Grids to the Waterfront 905.9



- 905.10      ***Policy UD-1.3.5: River Views***  
Protect and enhance street view corridors to the Potomac and Anacostia rivers~~river views in the~~ by shaping the design of buildings to frame views and by encouraging sensitive tree planting and landscaping that preserves an open sky and strong visual access to the water. Public river views on bridges and piers should be enhanced through features such as lighting, seating, and

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

**strong pedestrian and bicycle connections** ~~bridges, and pedestrian walkways on or near waterfront sites. The scale, density and building form along the city's waterfronts should define the character of these areas as human-scale, pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods and should protect views from important sites.~~ Figure 9.5~~10~~ ~~(at left)~~ illustrates preservation of river views on waterfront development sites. 905.10

905.11 *Policy UD-1.3.6: "Activating" Waterfront Spaces*  
~~Encourage design approaches, densities, and mixes of land uses that enliven waterfront sites. Architectural and public space design should be conducive to pedestrian activity, provide a sense of safety, create visual interest, and draw people to the water. 905.11~~

905.12~~11~~ *Policy UD-1.3.7~~6~~: **Neighborhood Waterfront Access and Connectivity***  
Improve the physical connections between neighborhoods and nearby waterfronts. Where feasible, extend the existing **urban** ~~city~~ grid into large waterfront sites to better connect nearby developed areas to the shoreline. **Greater access to the waterfront should also be achieved by reconfiguring roadways and other infrastructure along the waterfront to reduce access impediments for pedestrians and bicyclists, and through a consistent design treatment for waterfront trails** (see Figure 9.6~~11~~). 905.12~~11~~

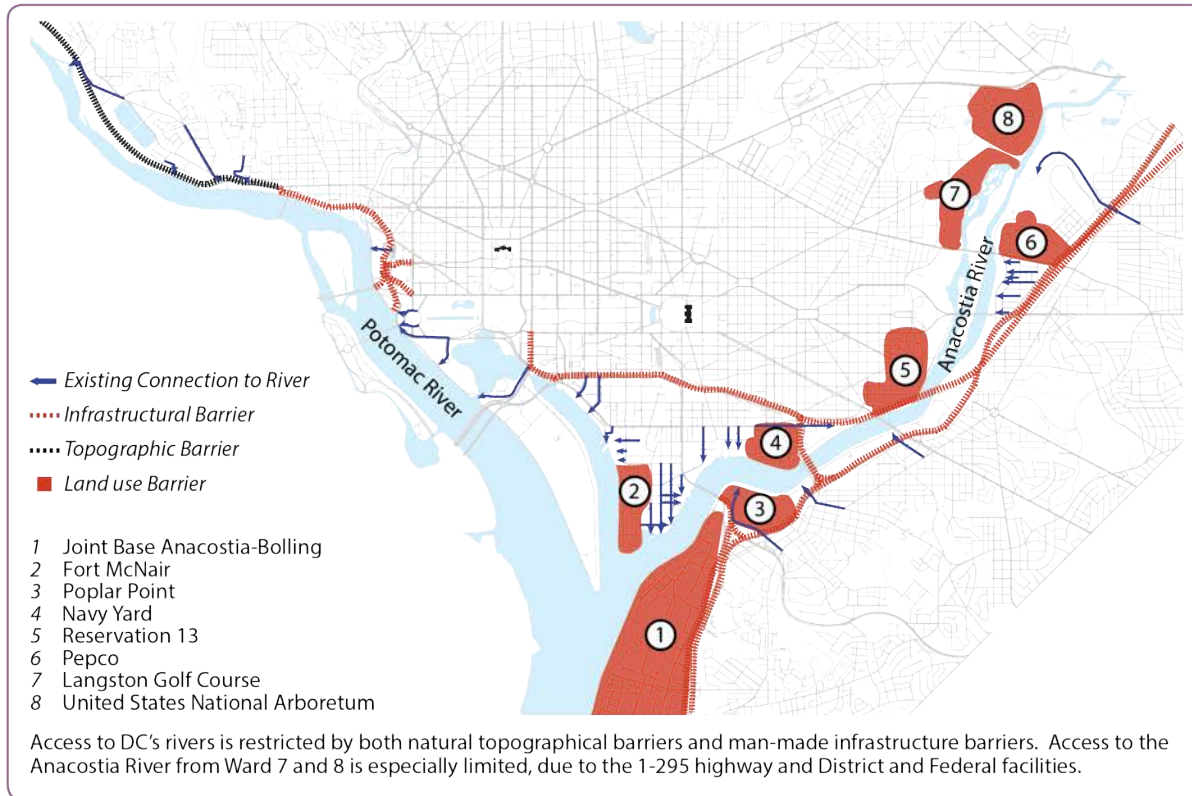


# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

905.13

**Figure 9.611: Extending Neighborhood Street Grids to the Waterfront**  
**Neighborhood Street Connections to Rivers 905.12**



905.13

**Policy UD-1.3.87: Anacostia East of the River Gateways**

Improve the visual and urban design qualities and pedestrian access of the gateways into Wards 7 and 8 East of the River neighborhoods from the Anacostia River crossings, with landscape and transportation improvements along Howard Road, Martin Luther King, Jr Avenue, Pennsylvania Avenue, Randle Circle (Minnesota and Massachusetts SE), Benning Road, East Capitol Street, and Kenilworth Avenue. 905.13

905.14

**Policy UD-1.3.8: Buzzard Point Vision Framework + Design Review Guide**

Use the Buzzard Point Vision Framework + Design Review Guide to guide and review both public and private investments in Buzzard Point, in partnership with District agencies, the adjacent Southwest and Capitol Riverfront neighborhoods, the development community, Fort McNair, NPS, and other stakeholders. 905.14



# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

- 905.15 *Action UD-1.3.A: Anacostia Waterfront Initiative*  
Continue to implement the Framework Plan for the Anacostia River, restoring Washington, **DC**'s identity as a waterfront city and bridging the ~~historic divide between the~~ east and west sides of the river. 905.15
- See Section UD-1.53 for information about ~~a discussion of~~ barriers to shoreline access.*
- 905.16** *Action UD 1.4.B: Waterfront Barriers*  
**Continue to explore ways to address freeway and highway barriers along the Anacostia and Potomac waterfronts. Study options for addressing the visual barrier presented by the Whitehurst Freeway and the physical barrier presented by the waterfront CSX rail line, and I-295's physical and visual barriers. 905.16**
- 905.17** *Action UD-1.3.C: Natural Shorelines*  
**Identify and map waterfront areas with potential to be converted to natural shorelines. 905.17**
- 906 **UD-1.4 ~~Reinforcing Boulevards~~ Enhancing Thoroughfares and Gateways 906**
- 906.1 Grand **and picturesque** streets in the form of avenues, **gateway corridors**, and ~~boulevards~~ **parkways, and long-established roads** are defining elements of Washington, **DC**'s urban form (See Figure 9.12). **They create dramatic points of entry into the District, wind through and define neighborhoods, and connect large parks and open spaces. Today, these thoroughfares are classified by their function as part of the transportation system, but they were created at various times and shaped by different forces. The avenues of the Plan of the City of Washington and the Olmsted Highway Plan establish a system of thoroughfares that have a sense of civic prominence, define neighborhoods, and frame views of the District. There are three types of thoroughfares with varying origins and purpose, each creating distinct places and experiences:** ~~The avenues originated as part of the L'Enfant design for the city. By overlapping a system of broad, diagonal thoroughfares on a grid of lettered and numbered streets, streets like Pennsylvania Avenue were given immediate importance, creating memorable views and a strong sense of civic identity. Beyond the heart of the city, these avenues extend to the outer neighborhoods, in some cases forming dramatic points of entry into the District of Columbia. Over time, several other streets in the city grid were designed or redesigned to display similar characteristics.~~
- **Avenues and gateway corridors, or the formal streets that originate in the District and extend into outlying areas, serve as entrances to the District, and have become part of the national identity of the District;**

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

- Parkways, or the streets with formal and natural characteristics that meander through and around the District, are lined with generous green space, and connect large parks and open spaces; and
  - Long-established roads, or the streets with irregular alignments that follow topography that pre-dates or was created very early in the District's history to connect communities outside of the L'Enfant City.
- 906.1

~~906.2 The District's avenues and boulevards are also emblematic of its social and economic divides. Some are thriving, while others are marked by boarded up buildings and degraded sidewalks. The most successful are located within the monumental core and west of 14th Street NW, encompassing such streets as Connecticut Avenue and Massachusetts Avenue. The less successful occur mostly in neighborhoods that are in transition, such as Georgia Avenue, Rhode Island Avenue, New York Avenue, Minnesota Avenue, Pennsylvania Avenue SE, South Capitol Street, and portions of North Capitol Street and East Capitol Street, East of the River. Good urban design is essential to reestablishing the city's avenues and streets as positive elements of city form. 906.2~~

~~906.3 One of the intrinsic functions of avenues and boulevards is that they provide "gateways" into the District and its neighborhoods. An appropriate sense of transition and arrival should be provided at each gateway. This can be achieved through a combination of landscaping, streetscape amenities, signage, view protection, and building and street design. 906.3~~

~~906.4 View protection is also another important objective along these streets. This is especially true on streets like North and South Capitol, which have symbolic importance but lack a commensurately grand streetscape. Distinctive street walls and facades, high-quality architecture, and street trees should provide greater focus and frame important vistas along these and other important thoroughfares. 906.4~~

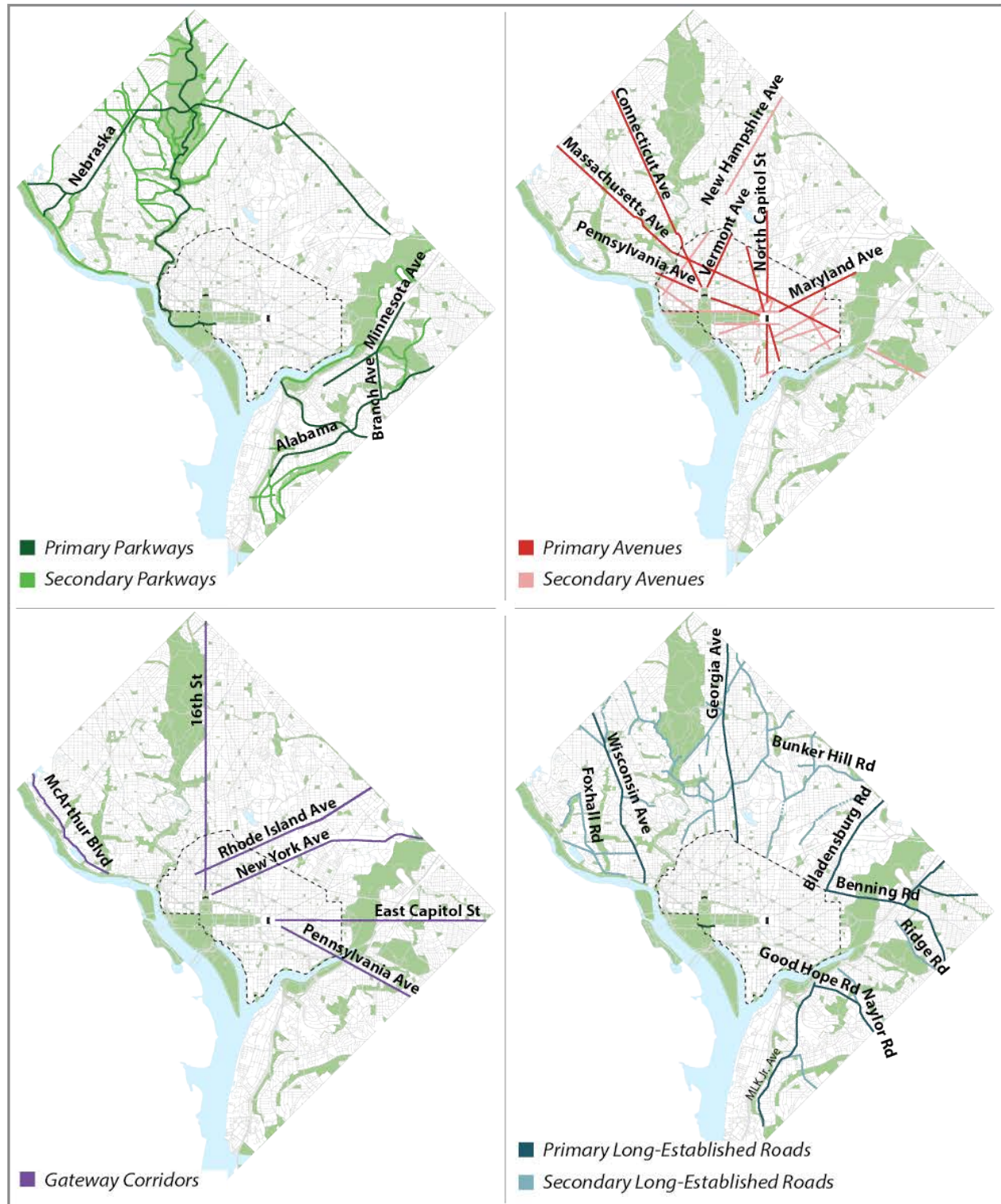
~~906.52~~ Major avenues/~~boulevards~~ and gateways are shown in ~~Map 9.2~~ **Figure 9.12.**  
~~906.52~~

~~906.63~~ ***Policy UD-1.4.1: Avenues/Boulevards Thoroughfares and Urban Form***  
Use Washington, **DC**'s major ~~avenues/boulevards~~ **thoroughfares** ~~as a way~~ to reinforce the form and identity of the **District, city**, connect its neighborhoods, and improve its aesthetic and visual character **through purposeful landscaping, tree planting, and streetscape design. Special attention should be placed on how public space, building restriction areas, and buildings along them contribute to each thoroughfare's character.** ~~Focus improvement efforts on avenues/boulevards in emerging neighborhoods, particularly those that provide important gateways or view corridors within the city. 906.63~~

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

906.74 ~~Map 9.2~~ **Figure 9.12: Major Avenues, Boulevards and Gateways** ~~Thoroughfare Types~~  
**in DC 906.4**



# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

- 906.~~8~~9      ***Policy UD-1.4.2: ~~District~~ ~~City~~ Gateways***  
Create more distinctive and memorable gateways at points of entry to the ~~city, District~~ and ~~points of entry to individual in~~ neighborhoods, parks and open spaces, and neighborhood centers. Gateways should provide a sense of transition, orientation, and arrival through improvements in the form of landscaping, art work, commemoration, and roadway design. ~~They~~ should be designed to make a strong and positive visual impact. 906.~~8~~9
- 906.~~9~~10      ***Policy UD-1.4.3: ~~Avenue/Boulevard~~ Thoroughfare Vistas and View Corridors***  
Protect picturesque views and view corridors along avenues, ~~boulevards,~~ parkways, and other major corridors, particularly along streets that terminate, connect, and frame at important neighborhood and national institutions, memorials, and parks ~~frame~~. Vistas along such streets should be accentuated by street trees and include ~~creating more~~ distinct facades of high architectural quality along well-defined street walls and, if appropriate, maintain a park-like character ~~improving landscaping, and requiring the highest architectural quality as development takes place. (see Figure 9.7).~~ 906.~~9~~10
- 906.10      ***Policy UD-1.4.4: Multi-Modal Avenue/Boulevard Design***  
~~Discourage the use of the city's major avenues and boulevards as "auto-only" roadways. Instead, encourage their use as multi-modal corridors, supporting transit lanes, bicycle lanes, and wide sidewalks, as well as conventional vehicle lanes. 906.10~~
- 906.11      ***Policy UD-1.4.~~5~~4: Priority Avenues/~~Boulevards~~ and Gateway Corridors***  
Focus the District's ~~city's~~ avenue/~~boulevard~~ and gateway corridor design improvements on historically important or symbolic streets, ~~that suffer from poor aesthetic conditions. Examples including~~ 16<sup>th</sup> Street, Rhode Island Avenue, North ~~South~~ Capitol Streets, Pennsylvania Avenue SE, and New York Avenue ~~Georgia Avenue and the avenues designated by the "Great Streets" program. Support federal efforts to preserve Constitution and Independence Avenues as major boulevards.~~ 906.11
- 906.12      ***Policy UD-1.4.5: Grading of New Streets***  
The grade of new streets should respond to existing topography, the existing grading of nearby streets, and the broader urban context. Grading should reflect the function of the street within the broader Olmstead Highway Plan, such as winding streets in residential neighborhoods with topography, level streets and sidewalks in commercial areas, and formal and consistent treatment along boulevards and avenues. 906.12
- 906.~~12~~13      ***Action UD-1.4.A: Zoning and Views***  
~~As part of the revision of the District's zoning regulations, Conduct a study to determine the feasibility of~~ overlays or special design controls that would apply to major ~~boulevards~~ thoroughfares and gateway streets. ~~The purpose of such~~

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

~~overlays would be to ensure the protection and enhancement of~~ to enhance important views, and to upgrade the aesthetic quality of key ~~boulevards~~ thoroughfares. 906.~~12~~13

906.~~13~~14

*Action UD-1.4.B: Boundary Streets and Entrances*

Explore the feasibility of enhancing points of arrival into the District at the major Maryland ~~and Virginia gateways to the /District~~ DC gateways through signage, public art, landscaping, restoration and careful maintenance of historic boundary markers, road design and pavement changes, special treatment of boundary streets (Southern, Eastern, and Western Avenues), and ~~similar~~ related improvements. 906.~~13~~14

906.14

~~Figure 9.7: Consistent Street wall~~ Walls and Street Trees Framing Monumental Views

~~See the Land Use Element for additional actions relating to the city's "Great Streets" program.~~

~~See the Historic Preservation Element for more on protecting the special character of the L'Enfant Plan's~~ Streets.

907

UD-1.5 Overcoming Physical Barriers

907.1

~~Physical barriers in the city such as highways and rail lines present urban design challenges. Besides their obvious impacts on walkability and aesthetics, they may create psychological and economic divides. Barriers not only include transportation features; they include natural features like rivers and streams, and land use features such as power plants and military bases. 907.1~~

907.2

~~There are a number of urban design solutions to better connect the city and reduce the effect of physical barriers. These include short-term techniques such as safer highway crossings for pedestrians and well-lighted underpasses and longer-term solutions that eliminate barriers entirely. Examples of the latter include air rights development over sunken freeways (such as I-395) and the rebuilding of the bridges across the Anacostia River with wider sidewalks and bike lanes. 907.2~~

907.3

*Policy UD-1.5.1: Mitigating Freeway Impacts*

~~Reduce the negative effects of freeways on neighborhoods by decreasing blight around freeway overpasses and underpasses, and improving pedestrian and bicycle overpasses. Longer-term solutions that address the design of the freeways themselves also should be explored. Such solutions should consider rebuilding freeways to reduce their "iron curtain" effect and developing the air rights over sunken freeways. 907.3~~

907.4

*Policy UD-1.5.2: Major Arterials*



# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

~~Reduce the barrier effects created by major arterials (such as New York Avenue and South Capitol Street) through improved signal timing, traffic calming, mid-crossing medians, and other design improvements that improve aesthetics and enhance safety at pedestrian crossings. 907.4~~

~~907.5 *Policy UD-1.5.3: Reducing Railroad Barriers*~~

~~Upgrade railroad overpasses and underpasses to maintain the continuity of the street network along rail lines and ensure the comfort and safety of pedestrians and bicyclists. In appropriate settings, such as Downtown Washington, explore longer-term solutions to addressing railroad barriers such as air rights development over the tracks. 907.5~~

~~907.6 *Action UD-1.5.A: Waterfront Barriers*~~

~~Continue to explore ways to address freeway and highway barriers along the Anacostia waterfront, including the removal of Water Street along the Southwest waterfront and the narrowing of I-395 at the Anacostia River. The city should also continue to study options for addressing the visual barrier presented by the Whitehurst Freeway and the physical barrier presented by the waterfront CSX rail line. 907.6:~~

~~907.7 *Action UD-1.5.B: Light Rail Design*~~

~~To the maximum extent possible, ensure that the design of the streetcar line along the east side of the Anacostia River does not create a barrier to waterfront access from East of the Anacostia River neighborhoods. 907.7~~ **Completed – See Implementation Table.**

~~See also the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Element for a discussion of trail policies, and the Lower Anacostia Waterfront/Near Southwest Area Element for a discussion of detailed provisions related to barriers and access to the Anacostia River.~~

~~908~~ **907** UD-2 ~~Creating Great Places~~ **Designing the Livable District 907**

~~908.1~~ **907.1** **The shape of the District profoundly affects the quality of life of its residents, from physical and behavioral health to opportunities for having close friends and neighbors to even how likely it is to find and hold a job. The built environment influences the ability for neighbors to interact, the opportunity for communities to form, and the richness of social networks. It regulates how much everyday exercise is possible through walking and biking on District streets and contributes to reducing crime when buildings support active facades, and public spaces are designed to support civic life. Beautiful parks, architecture, and public places can relieve stress, raise endorphin levels, and improve physical and emotional health. 907.1**

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

**907.2** A city's livability is measured by the safety, health, and happiness it provides to all its residents, particularly to the most vulnerable members of society: children, older adults, and those who are economically or socially marginalized. Additionally, every individual in Washington, DC will have a distinct definition of what makes a place livable for them. To realize a shared vision of livability, the District should be designed to be a place where all residents feel safe in their neighborhoods and are socially connected to one another; where they feel closely linked to community services, employment, education, shops, public parks, leisure, and culture; where healthy and active lifestyles can be fulfilled; and where children grow and play with increased freedom. 907.2

**907.3** This section of the ~~urban~~ **Urban design Design element Element** addresses **four key design aspects of the livable District:** ~~issues in three geographic settings:~~

- ~~• Central Washington~~
- ~~• Neighborhoods~~
- ~~• Large Sites:~~
  - Streets for People;
  - Designing for ~~Successful~~ **Vibrant, Inclusive** Neighborhoods;
  - Play Everywhere; and
  - The Accessible **District.** ~~City: 908.1~~ **907.3**

**909 908** **UD-2.1 ~~Place-Making In Central Washington~~ Streets For People 908**

**909.1 908.1** ~~Some of the very qualities that make Central Washington's design so memorable also create its greatest challenges. Distances are unusually long, walking is difficult in many places, and there is a lack of connectivity between the sub-districts of the central city. It is nearly four miles from the West End to the Navy Yard—arguably both are parts of the central business district yet the two feel like entirely different cities. The District's height limit, while lauded for its human scale, has also resulted in long rows of featureless office buildings with little architectural interest. Moreover, Downtown is not particularly well integrated with the National Mall. To some extent, the Mall divides rather than unites the central city, and adds to the perception of a city with multiple downtowns bearing little connection to one another.~~ **The District's streets are more than just spaces for transportation: they are also spaces that the public inhabits, where residents, workers, and visitors alike can participate in urban life. While streets must bring people to their destinations, they also serve as the community backdrop of the District, where neighbors mingle, children play, and culture and ideas are exchanged. The physical design and layout of a city's streets directly impact the human experience of the public realm in a**

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

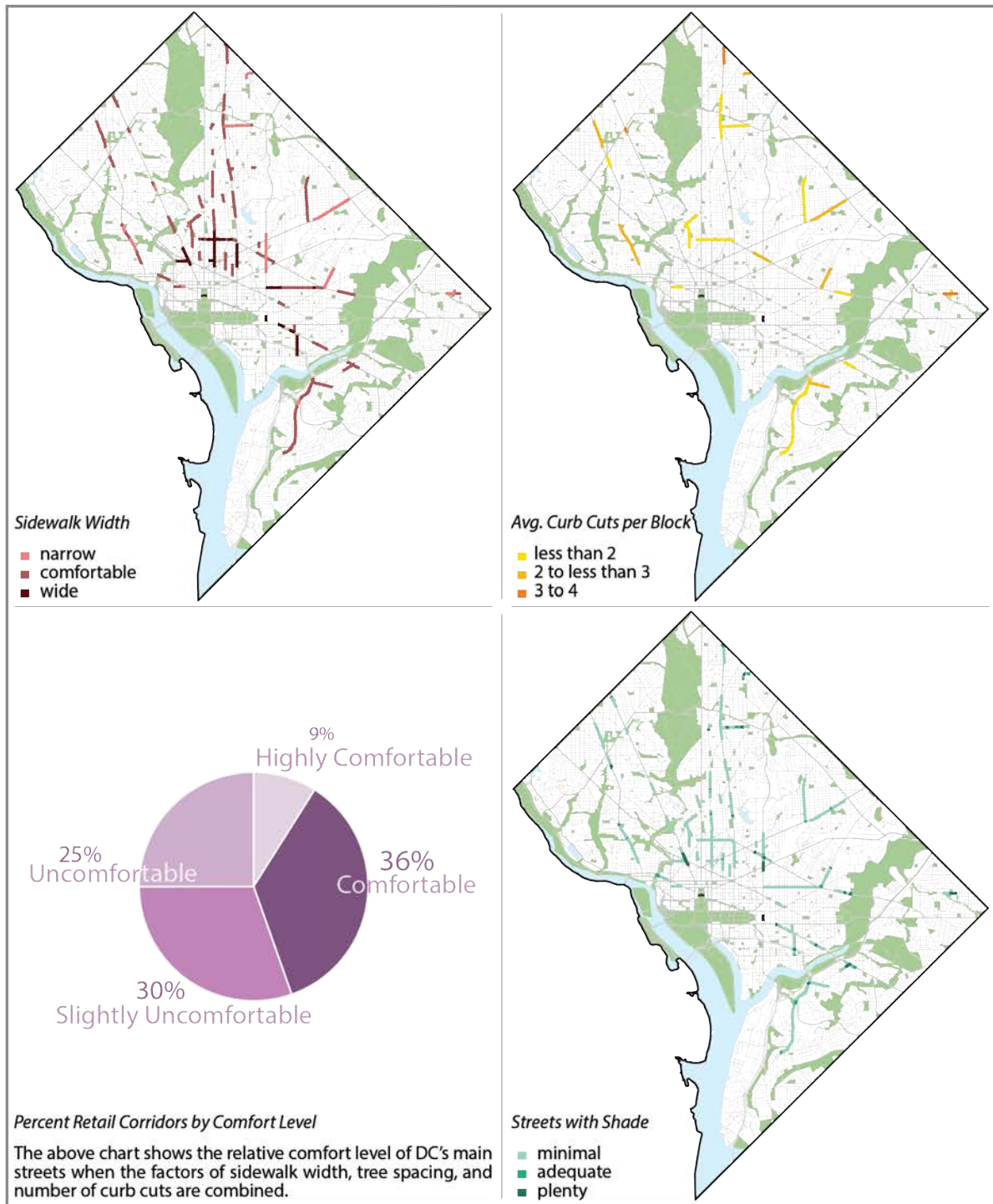
variety of ways: the design of a tree-lined residential street can foster casual conversations between neighbors, whereas the bustling pace of a retail corridor can encourage patrons to pause at a sidewalk café or to window shop while passing through. As shown in Figure 9.13, currently 25 percent of the District's retail corridors lack the pedestrian infrastructure of wide sidewalks, plentiful street trees, and minimal mid-block curb cuts to support enhanced pedestrian comfort and urban life. It is vital for the long-term prosperity of the growing District that Washington, DC place an increased focus on creating streets that are comfortable, walkable, interesting, and safe for pedestrians. ~~909.1~~ 908.1

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

**908.2**

**Figure 9.13: Pedestrian Comfort of the District's Main Streets 908.2**



# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

- ~~909.2 While the goal of creating a more coherent central business district has been in place for awhile, the current rapid pace of development means that the District must take a more proactive role. A stronger urban design framework is needed to attain the goal of a more cohesive and well-designed central city. 909.2~~
- ~~Sunken retail space is common in the District, as it allows for additional square footage in buildings that are otherwise limited in size by the Height Act.~~
- ~~909.3 This framework should establish a stronger identity for the emerging business districts on the northeast and southeast edges of Downtown. It should improve streets and public spaces, promote a higher level of architectural quality, and establish appropriate scale and density transitions to protect small-scale residential neighborhoods on the edges of Downtown. It should include strategies to deal with specific site challenges, such as the isolation of the Kennedy Center from surrounding land uses, the poor pedestrian environment at L’Enfant Plaza, and the presence of industrial uses on New Jersey Avenue, SE and Delaware Avenue just blocks from the US Capitol. 909.3~~
- ~~909.4 Design decisions for Central Washington should also address the peculiar architectural dynamics created by the 1910 Height Act. Currently, the desire to maximize buildable floor area while adhering to height limits often results in buildings with very little sculptural form. The most innovative and distinctive buildings tend to be public places—museums, libraries, and other structures where maximizing rentable space is not the primary objective. This is consistent with the city’s architectural heritage in some respects, but there are still opportunities to improve the design of office, residential, and retail buildings in the central city. 909.4~~
- ~~909.5 While the height limit clearly affects building form, it also affects street life in unexpected ways. It results in ground floors that are sunken below grade by as much as several feet to maximize the number of stories that can be accommodated in each building. This in turn creates challenges for street-level retailers, and impacts the experience of walking or shopping downtown. Other challenges include the appearance of vents, mechanical equipment, and other essential rooftop elements that exceed the maximum building height. The design of these elements takes on special importance given their high visibility on an otherwise “flat” downtown skyline. 909.5~~
- ~~909.6 As the Historic Preservation Element notes, the presence of numerous historic buildings, historic districts, and important vistas also affects design. Attempts to create false facades mimicking historic styles, or to preserve facades and tear down the buildings behind them, have produced mixed results. As the existing stock of aging office buildings is replaced, greater attention must be given to design quality, street character, and landscape. 909.6~~



# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

- 909.7 *Policy UD-2.1.1: Design Character*  
~~Create a more coherent design character for Central Washington by improving the physical linkages between the monumental core, the business sub-districts on the perimeter of the National Mall, and the expanding mixed use areas to the east and southeast of Downtown. Urban design strategies should focus on making the entire area more walkable, discouraging monolithic architecture, improving signage and streetscape features, and adding new land uses which make the area more lively, interesting, and dynamic.~~ 909.7 **Moved to Central Washington Element**
- 909.8 *Policy UD-2.1.2: Downtown Street and Block Pattern*  
~~Maintain a fine-grained pattern of Downtown blocks, streets, and alleys, with intersections and frontages that encourage pedestrian movement and reduce the potential for immense variations in scale and “fortresslike” office buildings. (see Figure 9.8)~~ 909.8 **Moved to Central Washington Element**
- 909.9 ~~Figure 9.8: Superblock versus Fine-Grained Street and Development Patterns~~
- 909.10 *Policy UD-2.1.3: Downtown Edges*  
~~Establish and maintain scale and density transitions between Downtown and adjacent lower density neighborhoods. Use variations in height, massing, and architectural quality to ensure that the fine-grained pattern of adjacent neighborhoods is protected. (see Figure 9.9)~~ 909.10 **Moved to Central Washington Element**
- 909.11 ~~Figure 9.9: Desired Scale Transitions at Downtown Edges to Residential Areas~~
- 909.12 *Policy UD-2.1.4: Architectural Excellence*  
~~Promote excellence in the design of Downtown buildings and landscapes. Particular attention should be focused on ground floor (street) levels, with greater architectural details used to improve visual image.~~ 909.12 **Moved to Central Washington Element**
- 909.13 *Policy UD-2.1.5: Federal Coordination*  
~~Coordinate with the federal government to achieve a consistent urban design vision for Central Washington. As applicable, the District should incorporate design concepts from the National Capital Planning Commission’s Legacy Plan and similar design-oriented plans for the monumental core of the city into its own design plans and strategies.~~ 909.13 **Moved to Central Washington Element**
- 909.14 *Policy UD-2.1.6: Pedestrian Bridges and Tunnels*  
~~Discourage the construction of second-level Downtown pedestrian bridges that drain activity from the street level. Subterranean tunnels between buildings also should be discouraged, unless they improve access to Metro and are necessary for pedestrian safety.~~ 909.14 **Moved to Central Washington Element**

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

~~Development along Chinatown's 7th Street shows how contemporary designs can be integrated into historic settings.~~

- 908.3**      ***Policy UD-2.1.1: Streetscapes That Prioritize the Human Experience***  
**Commercial streetscapes should be designed to be comfortable, safe, and interesting to pedestrians. At a minimum, commercial corridor sidewalks should be designed with clear, direct, accessible walking paths that accommodate a range of pedestrian users and facilitate a sense of connection to adjacent uses. Where width allows, corridors should have a generous presence of shade trees and café seating areas, as well as bicycle facilities. In areas with large pedestrian volumes, streetscapes should provide seating, drinking fountains, publicly accessible restrooms, and other infrastructure that supports increased frequency and duration of walking. 908.3**
- 908.4**      ***Policy UD-2.1.2: Neighborhood Streetscapes***  
**Neighborhood streetscapes should be designed to visually reflect the character and level of intensity of the adjacent land uses. For instance, narrow sidewalks may be appropriate for narrow streets with low-scale buildings, while sidewalks with more trees and vegetation may be appropriate for large-scale development. Pedestrian-oriented lighting should be designed to enhance walkability for all users, as well as visually reflect the character of neighborhood. 908.4**
- 908.5**      ***Policy UD-2.1.3: Complete Streetscape Design***  
**Co-locate multiple forms of transportation amenities such as bus shelters and bikeshare stations to better integrate them into a complete streetscape design. Design access for delivery trucks, valets, and rideshare services within the street and not at the expense of the pedestrian sidewalk or bike lanes. 908.5**
- 908.6**      ***Policy UD-2.1.4: Connections Between Public Spaces and Streets***  
**Public spaces, such as parks and plazas, should have entry points that create clear and porous visual and physical connections to the adjacent public realm. Where possible, coordinate streetscape designs to create a continuous experience between parks and streets. Limit the installation of tall fences or grade changes that create boundaries between parks and public rights-of-way. Public gathering spaces should be incorporated directly into the streetscape through pedestrian amenities, such as benches, public art, spacing of shade trees, and gardens. 908.6**
- 908.7**      ***Policy UD-2.1.5: Intersection Placemaking***  
**Incorporate urban design strategies as part of pedestrian and cyclist safety improvements at key neighborhood intersections. Placemaking**

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

improvements include installation of curb bump outs, raised crosswalks, artistic crosswalk markings, special paving, and other means of placemaking-oriented traffic calming. 908.7

908.8 *Policy UD 2.1.6: Minimize Mid-Block Vehicular Curb Cuts*  
Curb cuts should be avoided on streets with heavy pedestrian usage and minimized on all other streets. Where feasible, alleys should be used in lieu of curb cuts for parking and loading access to buildings. Curb cuts for individual residences should only be allowed if there is a predominant pattern of curb cuts and driveways on the block face. 908.8

908.9 *Policy UD-2.1.7: Streetscapes That Encourage Activation*  
Design new streetscape projects with public spaces that can be flexibly programmed to enhance public life with short- or long-term uses throughout the year to meet the needs of a wide variety of community members. Such spaces can be sites for creative placemaking efforts, block parties, festivals, markets, pop-up retail, or food trucks. 908.9

908.10 *Policy UD-2.1.8: Special Streetscape Design Guidelines*  
Create tailored streetscape guidelines for new neighborhoods or large sites undergoing redevelopment to promote interesting pedestrian experiences and a unique and consistent design for the public realm. 908.10

~~909.15~~908.11 *Action UD-2.1.A: Retail Ceiling Heights*  
~~Convene a Task Force of retailers, developers, architects, and others to evaluate alternative approaches to achieving higher first-floor ceiling heights in new Downtown buildings. Develop zoning regulations to require higher first-floor ceiling heights in new buildings along main streets and other commercial/mixed-use areas. 909.15~~908.11

908.12 *Action UD-2.1.B: Streetscape Design by Neighborhood Type*  
Review current District-wide streetscape design regulations and policies to prioritize the pedestrian experience. As necessary, develop a typology for basic streetscape design standards that meet the unique needs of various types of neighborhoods in the District, including the downtown business district, commercial areas, and high- and low-density residential neighborhoods. 908.12

908.13 *Action UD-2.1.C: Standards for Street Furniture*  
Produce standards for street furniture in public spaces, such as benches, trash cans, and bike racks, that designate spacing, layout, and other characteristics to promote socialization and interaction, as well as public health and well-being. 908.13

908.14 *Action UD-2.1.D: Public Space Permitting of Street Furniture*

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

Explore process improvements to the public space permitting process to reduce the time and complexity of reviewing and approving District-standard street furniture. 908.14

908.15

*Action UD- 2.1.E: Public Restrooms in Streetscapes*

Map the location of publicly accessible restrooms in the District, and develop location recommendations for the installations of new restrooms. Investigate opportunities to install attractive, clean, and safe standalone public restrooms that are accessible at all hours. 908.15

908.16

*UD-2.1.F: Sidewalk Widening*

Conduct a corridor study to investigate widening sidewalks through a variety of means including the establishment of building restriction lines, reducing cartway width, or pedestrian bulb-outs. 908.16

908.17

*Action UD-2.1.G: Placemaking and Vision Zero*

Establish a pilot initiative to enhance roadway safety through placemaking at intersections at three locations. Incorporate green infrastructure, low-impact design, and public life design principles. ~~914.11~~ 908.17

908.18

*Action UD-2.1.H: Resilient Public Life Guide*

Study and develop design guidance for how public spaces can be managed and designed to be more resilient during times of natural, security, and public health emergencies. 908.18

~~910~~909

UD-2.2 Designing for Vibrant ~~Successful~~ Neighborhoods 909

~~910.1~~909.1

The “sense of place” in the District’s neighborhoods is a function of their cultural history, physical features, ~~and~~ visual qualities, and resident mix. Those neighborhoods with a strong sense of place tend to share ~~neighborhoods with the strongest identities tend to share~~ certain walkable and well-connected “centers”, well-defined edges, attractive streets, and character-defining architecture. This is most apparent in the Washington, DC’s ~~city’s~~ historic districts, but it is also true in non-designated row house neighborhoods and in single-family neighborhoods where particular architectural styles, setbacks, and building forms prevail. Especially in row house neighborhoods, the repetitive use of form, materials, color, and spacing creates a sense of solidarity that transcends each individual structure. ~~910.1~~909.1

~~910.2~~

~~Not all neighborhoods have a strong sense of identity, however. Some are negatively affected by dilapidated buildings, poorly maintained properties, vacant storefronts, and worse. These problems may be exacerbated by the absence of landscaping and street trees. Infill development and the adaptive reuse of historic buildings in such areas create a real opportunity to establish a stronger identity, and to create neighborhood centers where they are lacking today. 910.2~~

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

~~910.3~~**909.2** Significant population growth in Washington, DC ~~the city's neighborhoods~~ is placing pressure on every neighborhood to grow and change~~will require a heightened focus on architectural quality in both well-established and emerging areas.~~ One particularly acute challenge is how to design and incorporate new affordable housing at varying levels of affordability, along with more family-sized housing inclusively throughout the District. Currently, 26 percent of DC neighborhoods lack the diversity of housing typologies to support the District's diverse housing needs (see Figure 9.14), but fortunately, many neighborhoods in Washington offer solutions on how to grow while maintaining neighborhood character (see Figures 9.15 and 9.16). A close examination of neighborhoods like Columbia Heights, Glover Park, and historic Anacostia show that infill development can be added to the District's historic neighborhoods through a focus on designing for contrasts in scale and height, use of high-quality materials that are durable and rich in texture, incorporation of character-defining details, and the continuation of established landscape elements. Buildings should also provide for the comfort, safety, and enjoyment of their users and the public by enhancing the public spaces that surround them and by providing sunlight or shade as appropriate and ameliorating windy conditionsIn neighborhoods of high architectural quality and strong identity, a greater emphasis on design compatibility and appropriate scale is needed. These factors are also important in neighborhoods of weak identity, but the priority should be on setting a higher design standard and defining a stronger, more positive image. ~~910.3~~**909.2**

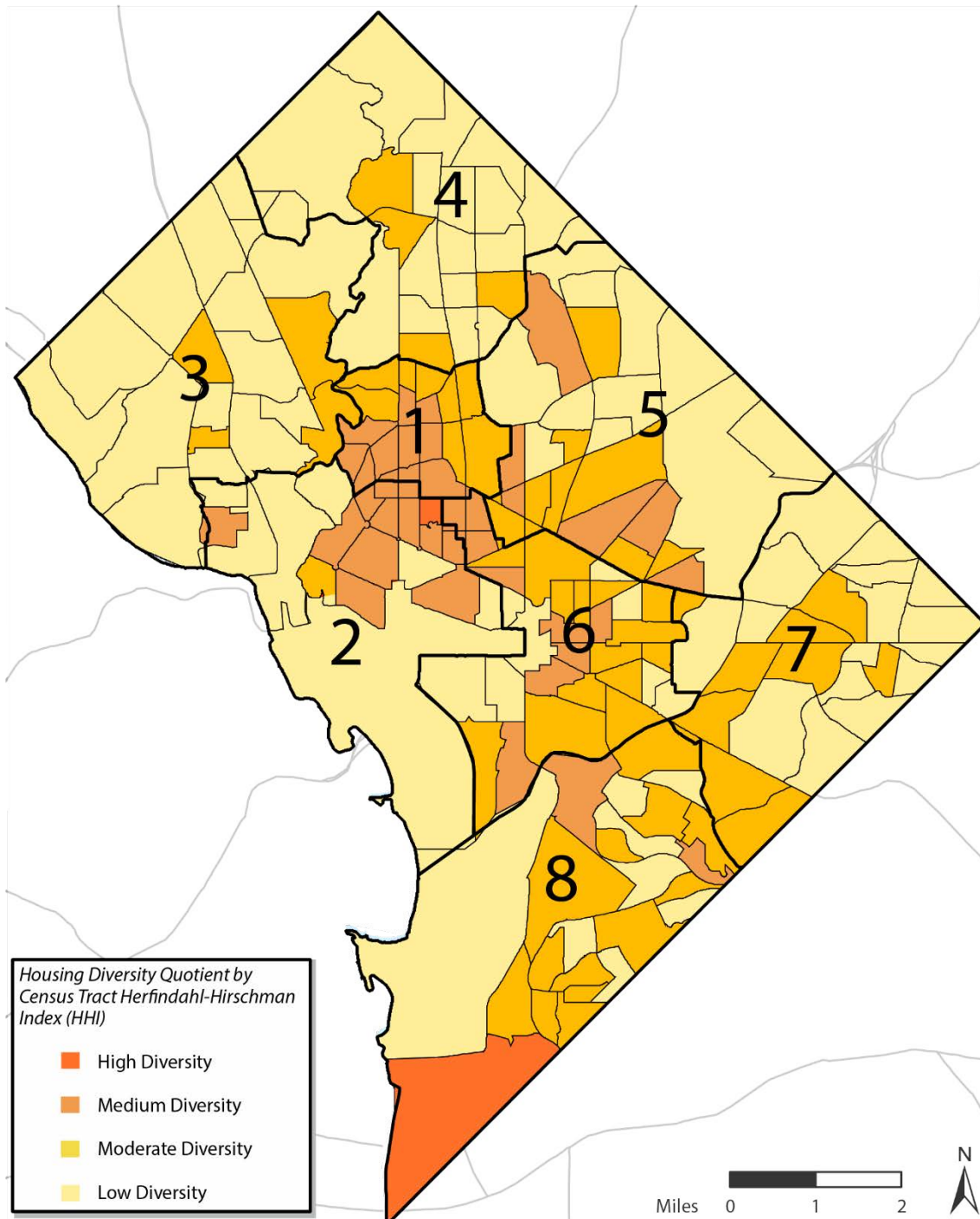


# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

**909.3**

**Figure 9.14: DC Neighborhood Diversity Index 909.3**



# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

- ~~910.4~~ ~~Regardless of neighborhood identity, overpowering contrasts in scale, height, and density should be avoided as infill development occurs. High quality materials that are durable and rich in texture and details should be encouraged. Firmly established building forms and landscape elements should be reinforced. These guidelines may seem self-evident, but they have not been consistently followed in the past. Even alterations and additions are not always sympathetic to architectural character, sometimes with jarring results. 910.4~~
- ~~910.5~~ ~~The design of commercial and mixed-use development also should be harmonious with its surroundings. This does not mean new buildings must duplicate adjacent buildings; rather it means that new construction should respect basic block characteristics like building alignment, access, proportion of openings (windows and doors), exterior architectural details (cornices, parapets, etc), and heights. Signage, awnings, and other exterior elements should be designed as an integral part of each structure and should avoid negative effects on the visual environment. Buildings should also provide for the comfort, safety, and enjoyment of their users, avoiding excessively windy conditions and providing sunlight or shade as is appropriate on each site. 910.5~~

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

**909.4**

**Figures 9.15: DC Neighborhoods with Diverse Housing 909.4**



# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

**909.5**

**Figures 9.16: DC Neighborhoods with Diverse Housing 909.5**



**910.6 909.6**

***Policy UD-2.2.1: Neighborhood Character and Identity***

Strengthen the ~~defining~~ visual qualities of Washington, ~~DC~~'s neighborhoods ~~as-~~  
~~This should be achieved in part by relating the scale of~~ infill development ~~and~~  
~~building renovations occur by encouraging the use of high-quality and high-~~  
~~performance architectural designs, alterations, renovations, and additions to~~  
~~existing neighborhood context.~~ **910.6 909.6**

**910.7 909.7**

***Policy UD-2.2.2: Areas of Strong Architectural Character***

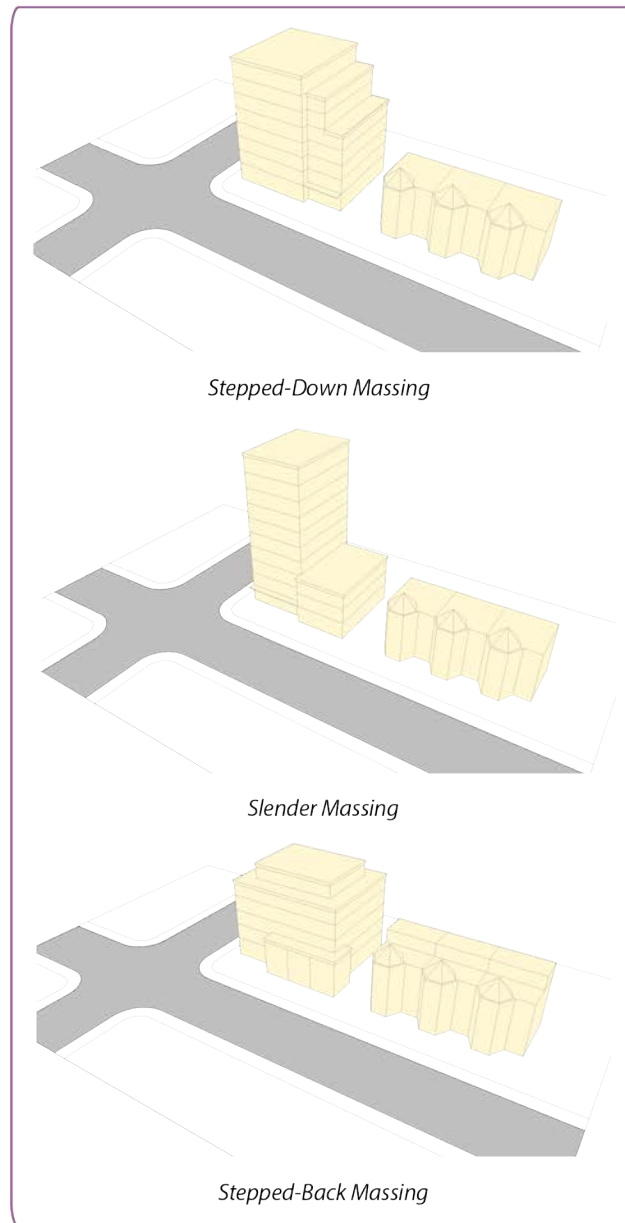
Preserve the architectural continuity and design integrity of historic districts and other areas of strong architectural character. New development, **additions, and renovations** within such areas do not need to replicate prevailing architectural styles exactly but should be complementary ~~(see Figure 9.10).~~ **910.7 909.7**

*See the Historic Preservation Element for additional policies and actions related to historic districts.*

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

~~910.8~~ **909.8** Figure 9.1017: ~~Complementary Massing for New Development in Historic Districts and Areas of Strong Architectural Character~~ **Encouraged Transitions in Building Intensity and Scale** 909.8



~~910.9~~ **909.9** ***Policy UD-2.2.3: Neighborhood Mixed-Use Centers***  
Undertake strategic and coordinated efforts to create neighborhood **mixed-use** centers, ~~civic buildings, and shopping places~~ that reinforce community identity **and form compact, walkable environments with a broad mix of housing**



# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

types, employment opportunities, neighborhood shops and services, and civic uses and public spaces. New buildings and projects should support the compact development of neighborhood centers and increase the diversity of uses and creation of public spaces where needed (see Figure 9.11). ~~910.9~~ **909.9**

~~910.10~~ ~~Figure 9.11: Neighborhood Center Concept~~

~~910.11~~ **909.10** *Policy UD-2.2.4: Transitions in Building Intensity*

~~Establish~~ **Design** ~~gradual~~ transitions between large-~~scale~~ and small-scale development. The relationship between taller, more visually prominent buildings and lower, smaller buildings (such as ~~single~~ **single**-family or row houses) can be made more pleasing and gradual through a variety of context-specific design strategies, such as a slender massing of taller elements, stepping back the building at floors above its neighbors' predominant roof line, stepping a building's massing down to meet the roof line of its neighbors, or strategic placement of taller elements to mark corners, vista terminations, or large open-space frontages. ~~when the transition is gradual rather than abrupt. The relationship can be further improved by designing larger buildings to reduce their apparent size and recessing the upper floors of the building to relate to the lower scale of the surrounding neighborhood.~~ ~~910.11~~ **909.10**

~~910.12~~ *Policy UD-2.2.5: Creating Attractive Facades*

~~Create visual interest through well-designed building facades, storefront windows, and attractive signage and lighting. Avoid monolithic or box-like building forms, or long blank walls which detract from the human quality of the street. (see Figure 9.12)~~ ~~910.12~~

~~910.13~~ *Figure 9.12: Façade Articulation*

~~910.14~~ *Policy UD-2.2.6: Maintaining Facade Lines*

~~Generally maintain the established facade lines of neighborhood streets by aligning the front walls of new construction with the prevailing facades of adjacent buildings. Avoid violating this pattern by placing new construction in front of the historic facade line, or by placing buildings at odd angles to the street, unless the streetscape is already characterized by such variations. Where existing facades are characterized by recurring placement of windows and doors, new construction should complement the established rhythm.~~ ~~910.14~~

~~910.15~~ **909.11** *Policy UD-2.2.74: Infill Development*

New construction, infill development, redevelopment, and renovations to existing buildings should respond to and complement the defining visual and spatial qualities of the surrounding neighborhood, particularly regarding building roof lines, setbacks, and landscaping. ~~Regardless of neighborhood identity, avoid~~ **Avoid** overpowering contrasts of scale and, height ~~and density~~ as infill development occurs. ~~910.15~~ **909.11**

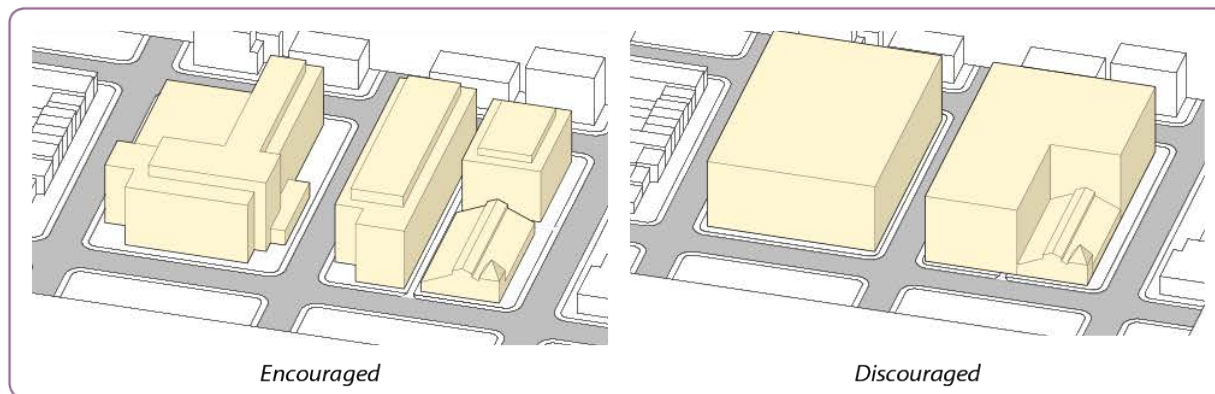
# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

### ~~910.16~~ **909.12** *Policy UD-2.2.85: Large-Scale Development*

~~Ensure that~~ New developments on parcels that are larger than the prevailing neighborhood lot size **should be** carefully integrated with adjacent sites. Structures on such parcels should be broken into smaller, more varied forms, particularly where the prevailing street frontage is characterized by small, older buildings with varying facades. **Incorporate existing assets, such as historic buildings and significant natural landscapes, into the design of redeveloped large sites. For sites that were originally planned as integrated complexes of multiple buildings, historic groupings of structures should be conserved where possible.** (see Figure 9.138 ~~for examples of breaking up the massing of development on lots larger than the prevailing neighborhood lot size~~). ~~910.16~~ **909.12**

### ~~910.17~~ **909.13** Figure 9.138: ~~Breaking Up Massing of Development on Lots Larger than Prevailing Neighborhood Lot Size~~ **Development Massing 909.13**



### ~~910.17~~ **909.14** *Policy UD-2.2.96: ~~Protection~~ Preservation of Neighborhood Open Space*

~~Ensure that~~ Infill development **should** respect and improve the integrity of neighborhood open spaces and public areas. Buildings should be designed to ~~avoid~~ **minimize** the loss of sunlight and ~~reduced~~ **maximize the** usability of neighborhood parks and plazas. **Buildings adjacent to parks or natural areas should orient their entrances or other community-serving functions toward these shared resources.** ~~910.17~~ **909.14**

### ~~910.19~~ *Policy UD-2.2.10: Surface Parking*

~~Encourage the use of shade trees and landscaping or screening of surface parking areas. Parking should be designed so that it is not the dominant element of the street, and should be located behind development rather than in front of it (see Figure 9.14).~~

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

~~910.20 Figure 9.14: Parking Lot Location Behind Buildings Rather than in Front 910.20~~

~~910.21 *Policy UD-2.2.11: Parking Structures*  
Encourage creative solutions for designing structured parking to minimize its visual prominence. Where feasible, the street side of parking structures should be lined with active and visually attractive uses to lessen their impact on the streetscape (see Fig 9.15). 910.21~~

~~910.22 Figure 9.15: Concealing Parking Garages with Active “Liner” Uses~~

~~910.23 *Policy UD-2.2.12: Strip Shopping Centers*  
Ensure that zoning and parking standards discourage strip commercial shopping centers and auto-oriented building designs within designated neighborhood centers. 910.23~~

~~910.24 *Policy UD-2.2.13: Urban Design Priorities*  
Focus the District’s urban design assistance efforts on neighborhoods where the original design character has been damaged by disinvestment, blight, and poor architecture. 910.24~~

**909.14 *Policy UD-2.2.6: Planning for Large Sites***  
**Urban design plans for large sites should consider not only the site itself but also the context of surrounding neighborhoods, including the continuation of and connection to existing street grids. 909.14**

**909.15 *Policy UD-2.2.7: Resilient and Sustainable Large Site Development***  
**Site plan large sites to minimize the risk of flooding to buildings and extreme heat and other climate impacts. Preserve natural resources and implement stormwater management best practices, while maintaining active building frontages and pedestrian-focused streetscapes. 909.15**

*Also See Parks and Open Space, Land Use, and Environmental Protection elements for additional information.*

~~910.25~~**909.16 *Action UD-2.2.A: Scale Transition Study***  
Complete a “Scale Transition Study” ~~which to~~ evaluates options for improving design compatibility between **larger-scale** ~~more dense~~ and **lower-scale** ~~less dense~~ areas. The study should respond to the varying situations where **larger-scale** ~~higher density~~ development is (or will be) situated adjacent to lower-~~scale density~~, predominantly residential neighborhoods. It should include design guidelines and provisions for buffers (including open space), stepping down of building heights, and solutions that reflect the different lot dimensions, block faces, and street and alley widths found in different parts of the **District** ~~city~~. ~~910.25~~**909.16**

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

- ~~910.26~~**909.17** *Action UD-2.2.B: Use ~~ing~~Zoning and Other Regulatory Tools to Achieve Design Goals*  
Explore awards and incentives to promote excellence in the design of new buildings and public spaces. ~~Zoning~~ **Recommendations** should include incentives for facade features, window placement, courtyards, buffering, and other exterior architectural elements that improve the compatibility of structures, including roof structures, with their surroundings while promoting high architectural quality; ~~including and~~ allowing for innovative, contemporary design. ~~910.26~~**909.17**
- ~~910.27~~ *Action UD-2.2.C: Conservation Districts*  
~~Explore the use of “Conservation Districts” to protect neighborhood character in older communities which may not meet the criteria for historic districts but which nonetheless have important character defining architectural features.~~ ~~910.27~~  
**Completed – See Implementation Table.**
- 909.18** *Action UD-2.2.C: High-Quality Affordable Housing Review*  
**Conduct a review of the District's affordable housing policies, buildings, and zoning regulations to identify impediments that inhibit affordable housing from achieving high quality design. Produce a list of recommended changes to these codes, policies, and supplement with a form-based guide that outlines how new dwelling units can be better integrated into existing neighborhoods.** **909.18**
- 909.19** *Action UD-2.2.D: Urban Design Strategies for Resilient Communities*  
**Research best practices and develop recommendations and urban design and biophilic guidelines to help the District mitigate hazards, such as flooding and climate threats (e.g., sea level rise and extreme heat), while meeting its other urban design goals.** **909.19**
- 911.20** *Action UD-2.2.E: Design Guidelines for Large Sites*  
**Develop design guidelines as part of the review process for large site developments. These guidelines should address building appearance, streetscape, signage and utilities, parking, landscaping, buffering, protection of historic resources, compatibility of development with surrounding neighborhoods, and environmental sustainability.** **911.20**  
  
**See Land Use Element for additional policies, actions and definitions for large sites.**
- ~~916.6~~**911.21** *~~Policy~~ Action UD-4.2.F: Design Guidelines*  
**Develop illustrated design guidelines for private residential areas and commercial uses addressing such architectural and resilient aspects as facade design, building texture and materials, lighting, detail, signage, and building-to-street relationship. Design guidelines should allow for flexibility and**

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

creativity, and in most cases should be performance-oriented rather than based on rigid standards. 916.6911.21

### ~~911~~ 912 UD-2.3 Play Everywhere ~~The Design Of New Neighborhoods~~ 912

~~911.1~~ 912.1 The potential redevelopment of a dozen or so “large sites” around the city provides particularly important urban design opportunities (see the Land Use Element for a map of large sites). The large sites provide some of the city’s best opportunities for distinctive architecture as well as the application of green design and low impact development principles. While these sites are largely discussed for their housing and economic development potential, their reuse can achieve parallel urban design objectives. They can and should improve neighborhood connectivity, create new open space, and define a stronger identity for adjacent areas. Large sites represent an unparalleled opportunity to knit the city together, address historic inequities, and position the District at the forefront of comprehensive planning; in short, they represent a major component of our ~~inclusive city~~ Play is a universal experience that brings different people together, helps children learn, and promotes better physical and mental health for all residents. When play is thoughtfully designed into the public realm, it creates enriching, whimsical, and memorable public spaces and facilitates interactions and community-building among residents of diverse backgrounds and ages. Before the advent of the automobile, play largely happened on the neighborhood street, in the public square, and in the formal federal and ceremonial public spaces of the District, such as the National Mall. Over time, play slowly receded to private yards and public playgrounds. Today, play largely happens in safety-engineered playgrounds or the unique urban park with a splash fountain or playable sculpture. 912.1

912.2 Encouraging play in public spaces requires policies and actions that can address multiple challenges, both physical and regulatory. Structural barriers, such as the infrequent placement of public playgrounds, make it harder for 47 percent of District households to access playgrounds within a quarter-mile of their homes. Inadequate access is reinforced by social behaviors where many kids go to playgrounds only if accompanied by adults. Washington, DC has been addressing the structural challenges through the renovation and creation of more than 40 playgrounds in the last 10 years and the creation of new signature park spaces, such as Canal Park, with interactive, playable elements. The District will work further toward bringing play even closer to residents through a variety of local and small-scale play spaces that are built into the fabric of neighborhoods, streets, and schools. 912.2

~~911.2~~ *Policy UD-2.3.1: Reintegrating Large Sites*



# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

~~Reintegrate large self-contained sites back into the city pattern. Plans for each site should establish urban design goals and principles which guide their subsequent redevelopment. 911.2~~

- ~~911.3 Urban Design Coordination at the Southeast Federal Center  
One recent urban design success story is the Southeast Federal Center (SEFC). The process of engagement between the District and the federal government on this site resulted in a plan that provides for mixed use development, improved waterfront access, and the extension of the city street grid into a formerly secured area. Development has successfully proceeded by addressing security and liability concerns, and reusing a large portion of the site for federal office uses (USDOT). The balance of the site will be redeveloped according to mutually agreed upon planning and urban design principles. The SEFC itself was planned in the context of a larger framework, the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative (AWI). The AWI recognized the impact that this area's transformation could have on revitalizing the Near Southeast neighborhood and achieving broader waterfront revitalization goals.~~
- ~~911.4 *Policy UD-2.3.2: Large Site Scale and Block Patterns*  
Establish a development scale on large sites that is in keeping with surrounding areas. "Superblocks" (e.g., oversized tracts of land with no through streets) should generally be avoided in favor of a finer grained street grid that is more compatible with the texture of Washington's neighborhoods. This also allows for more appropriately scaled development and avoids large internalized complexes or oversized structures (see Figure 9.16). 911.4~~
- ~~911.5 Figure 9.16: Large Site Planning Principles~~
- ~~911.6 *Policy UD-2.3.3: Design Context for Planning Large Sites*  
Ensure that urban design plans for large sites consider not only the site itself, but the broader context presented by surrounding neighborhoods. Recognize that the development of large sites has ripple effects that extend beyond their borders, including effects on the design of transportation systems and public facilities nearby. 911.6~~
- ~~911.7 *Policy UD-2.3.4: Design Trade-offs on Large Sites*  
Balance economic development and urban design goals on large sites. In some cases, it may be appropriate to develop a site in a manner that does not capitalize on its full economic value in order to achieve an important urban design objective, such as creation of new waterfront open space or preservation of a historic landmark. 911.7~~
- ~~911.8 *Policy UD-2.3.5: Incorporating Existing Assets in Large Site Design*  
Incorporate existing assets such as historic buildings, significant natural landscapes, and panoramic vistas in the design of redeveloped large sites. For~~

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

~~sites that were originally planned as integrated complexes of multiple buildings, historic groupings of structures should be conserved where possible. 911.8~~

- 912.3**      ***Policy UD-2.3.1: Play for Every Age***  
**Create appealing plaza spaces that incorporate play and welcome multiple generations, such as playable fountains, skateboarding facilities, climbable sculptures, chess tables, and other interactive elements. In particular, attention should be paid to elements that can encourage social play and interaction among community members, play between parents and children, and opportunities for engaging teenagers. 912.3**
- 912.4**      ***Policy UD-2.3.2: Playing in the Square***  
**Encourage the use of formal public squares and parks as everyday play spaces and explore ways to incorporate design features that encourage play when redesigning signature public open spaces. 912.4**
- 912.5**      ***Policy UD-2.3.3: Play Everyday***  
**Encourage the creation of play spaces in or near public and private facilities where people gather and receive services on a routine basis, such as transit stops, community-serving businesses, medical offices, and government facilities. 912.5**
- 912.6**      ***Policy UD-2.3.4: Streets and Corners as Play Spaces***  
**Create mini-play destinations on neighborhood blocks to bring play closer to where people live and help encourage social interaction between neighbors. Encourage the installation of small-scale play features in landscaped public parking areas or along sidewalks in the tree zone. 912.6**
- 912.7**      ***Policy UD-2.3.5: Shared Play Spaces***  
**Promote the incorporation of play spaces in the common outdoor areas of new multi-family buildings, with a focus on spaces for less mobile infants and toddlers. Courtyards, terraces, and roofs can serve as outdoor spaces for children's play. 912.7**
- 911.9**      ***Action UD-2.3.A: Design Guidelines for Large Sites***  
~~Develop design guidelines for large sites prior to their development. Such guidelines should address building appearance and streetscape, signage and utilities, parking design, landscaping, buffering, protection of historic resources, "blending" of development with surrounding neighborhoods, and design principles that promote environmental sustainability. 911.9~~
- 911.10**      ***Action UD-2.3.B: Form-Based Zoning Codes***  
~~Explore the use of form-based zoning codes on selected large sites as a way of establishing desired urban design characteristics without rigidly prescribing allowable uses. 911.10~~      **Completed – See Implementation Table.**

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

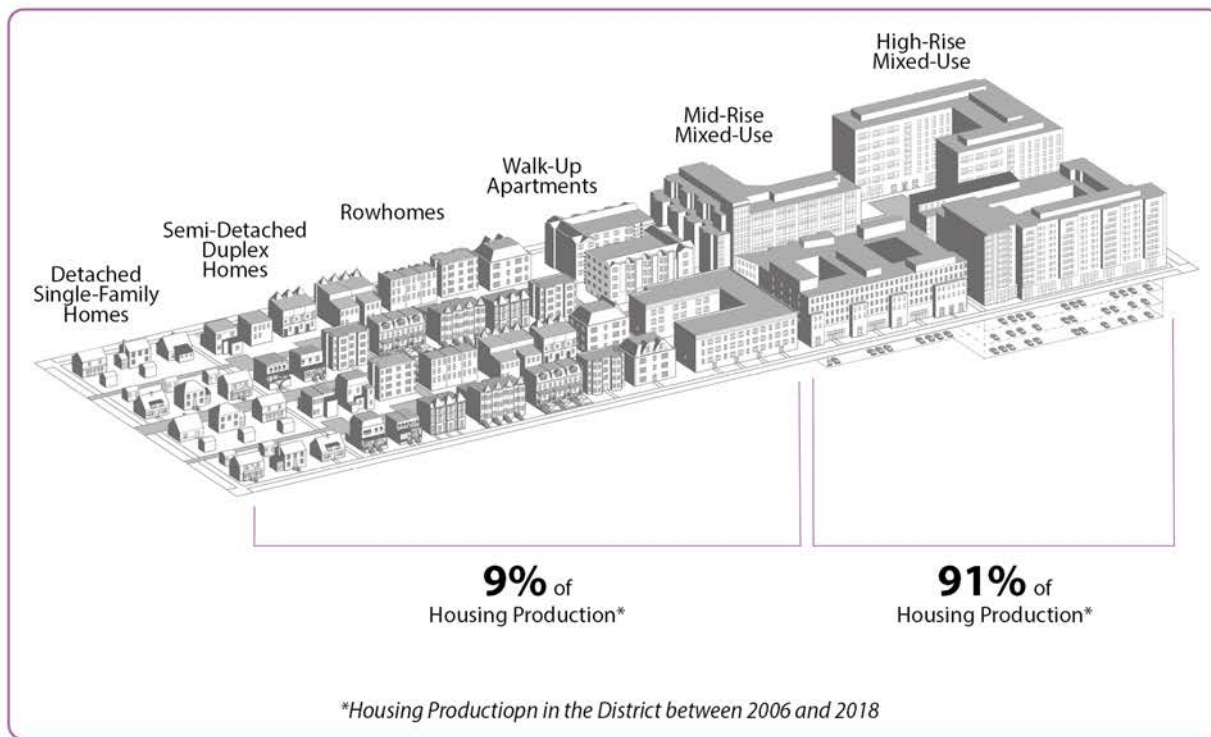
- 912.8**      *Action UD-2.3.A: Play Streets Guidelines*  
**Develop guidelines for resident and civic organization activation of streets and other public spaces as temporary or permanent safe play spaces, and investigate regulatory changes necessary to enable play streets. 912.8**
- 912.9**      *Action UD-2.3.B: Playable Art*  
**Complete permanent artistic play structures in small parks, street corners, or civic buildings to pilot the concept of playable streets. 912.9**
- 913**            **UD 2.4 The Equitable District 913**
- 913.1**            **The needs of District residents are changing and becoming more diverse as families have more children and the population diversifies. Design can be a crucial tool to make Washington, DC an open, inviting, safe, and delightful place for children, families, seniors, and persons with disabilities. However, the design of new neighborhoods and buildings does not entirely meet the needs of a growing and diverse population. Ninety-one percent of new housing growth between 2006 and 2018 has been in multi-family buildings that add considerable supply but tend to have units that are smaller in size (see Figure 9.19). Creating accessible and inclusive spaces not only means providing and retaining a larger number of housing units for families but also reexamining the amenities that these new buildings and neighborhoods have, the way they relate to open space, and how they provide places for residents of all backgrounds to participate in a rich and full public life. 913.1**

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

**913.2**

**Figure 9.19: Housing Typology Transect 913.2**



**913.3**

**Policy UD-2.4.1: Inclusive and Diverse Neighborhoods**

**Provide for neighborhood spaces that support a diverse array of users, particularly spaces that can be designed and inhabited by people who have typically been marginalized. Inclusive neighborhood spaces should be designed to enable social interaction among neighbors and to allow for community and cultural expression as the community's needs evolve. These spaces should be inclusive for racial and ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ populations, women, persons with disabilities, older adults, youth, immigrants/refugees, and pregnant women. 913.3**

**913.4**

**Policy UD 2.4.2: Design for All Ages and abilities**

**Design public spaces for use by all age groups, especially for teenagers, older adults, and persons with disabilities, through the use of universal wayfinding and the highest standards of accessible design. During processes for designing public spaces, these groups should be intentionally engaged and included in the design process. 913.4**

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

- 913.5** *Policy UD 2.4.3: Children Everywhere*  
Incorporate family and toddler/youth-oriented uses and accommodations into mixed-use projects, commercial projects, and public facilities. These may include special-purpose facilities, family bathrooms, and play-friendly waiting rooms. 913.5
- 913.6** *Policy UD-2.4.4: Accessible Neighborhoods at Every Scale*  
Design large sites to facilitate good connections to District-wide and regional destinations by public transportation. Design streets and other aspects of the public realm to enable residents, workers, and visitors of all abilities the same level of access to public destinations. 913.6
- 913.7** *Action UD 2.4.A: Design Guidelines for Higher-Density, Family-Sized Housing*  
Develop design guidelines for higher-density, family-sized housing with the intent to address key design issues at the scale of the neighborhood, site, building, and unit that relate to residential livability for families with children. 913.7
- 913.8** *Action UD 2.4.B: Design Standards for Universal Wayfinding*  
Develop a standard template to enhance universal wayfinding integrated into public art, buildings, and streetscapes as well as signage. The template should be designed to be employed District-wide, yet customizable to showcase or promote the individual needs and character of various neighborhoods across the District. 913.8
- 913.9** *Action UD-2.4.C: Toolkit for Inclusive and Intergenerational Public Space Design*  
Research and compile a set of engagement strategies and design guidelines for inclusive and intergenerational public spaces in neighborhoods. These guidelines should include best practices for how to encourage community-led design efforts, successful ways to encourage community and cultural self-expression in the public realm (which includes streets, sidewalks, parks, plazas, and other public spaces), and incorporate accessible design principles, such as deaf space. 913.9
- 912 914** UD-3 ~~Fostering A Vibrant Public Life~~im—proving The Public Realm914
- 912.1 914.1** The District’s “public realm” ~~includes its streets, sidewalks, parks, plazas, civic buildings, and other public spaces. Such spaces~~ represents half of Washington, DC’s ~~the District of Columbia’s~~ land area, with street rights-of-way alone accounting for ~~over~~ more than 10,000 acres. The public realm provides spaces for residents to experience District life, recreate and relax, and socialize. Great public spaces are free and available to all. They have the capacity to create neighborhood pride, become places for cultural and civic events, encourage a more open and democratic society, and provide access for



# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

marginalized individuals and groups to express themselves. The District is fortunate to have a wealth of park spaces, squares, and pedestrian-friendly streets that can perform these vital roles. However, these parks and spaces can often be designed or programmed in ways that prevent public life from being fully realized, anything from a lack of seating to regulations that disincentive community maintenance. Many streets have transportation demands that overwhelm the public life of the sidewalk, making spending time outside less enjoyable and discouraging cafe seating and outdoor retailing. The design of public space provides some of the best opportunities for the District to not only improve aesthetics and image but to also improve ~~our~~ livability, enjoyment, and public life. ~~More often than not, it is~~ It is often the quality of public space that defines the great cities and neighborhoods of the world. ~~912.1~~ 914.1

~~This section of the Urban Design Element focuses on three objectives:~~

- ~~• Improving the appearance and vitality of street and sidewalk space~~
- ~~• Balancing security and aesthetic considerations in public realm design~~
- ~~• Encouraging superior public building and infrastructure design. 912.2~~

~~913~~ 915

### UD-3.1 Public Life For All ~~urban Design Hits The Street 915~~

~~913.1~~ 915.1

~~Washington has a traditional urban street pattern, defined by small blocks and an interconnected grid, a hierarchy of major and minor streets, alleys in many neighborhoods, and a pattern of buildings that relates strongly to streets and sidewalks. This pattern creates animated street life in much of the city. Walkable streets make the city more accessible, inclusive, and environmentally friendly. They also promote public health and fitness.~~ A varied and vibrant public life is an important part of achieving an inclusive and prosperous Washington, DC. Having a vibrant public life for all means that every neighborhood can realize spaces that encourage greater community use, interaction, and enjoyment. Parts of Washington, DC have a rich public life, but many parts of the District do not fully enjoy the benefits of public life. It is critical to promote many different forms and places for public life that reflect the varied cultures of the District's residents and its neighborhoods. It is also important to design public spaces throughout the District in a way that equitably invites residents to use these common spaces as places to celebrate, relax, and mingle. 915.1

915.2

Evolving technology and digital tools can influence and maximize opportunities for a more robust and inclusive public life. The urban design of public places can leverage technology in a variety of ways, such as measuring

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

the success of public spaces in ways that are both experiential and quantitative; merging physical elements of the public realm with virtual augmentation to create new and ephemeral experiences; and communicating information and wayfinding for increased efficiency, safety, and social interaction. The integration of technology into these aspects of public life should be balanced with a vision of people-centered urbanism anchored by real-life experience, equity, and urban vitality. 915.2

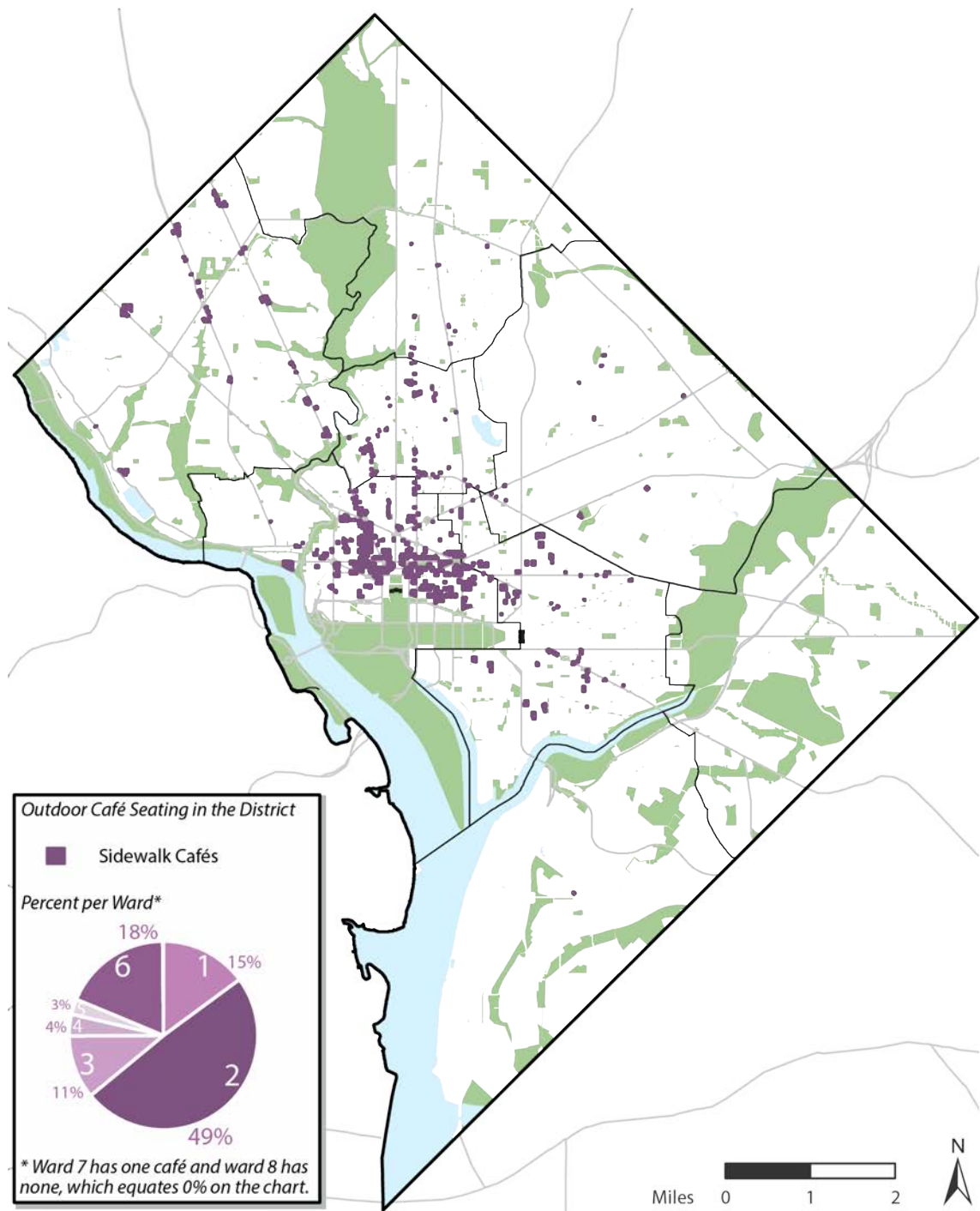
### 915.3

Finally, the District and federal agencies should examine their regulatory systems for permitting public life activities, such as special events and festivals, farmers markets, vending, public art, and café seating so that residents have opportunities to create unique cultural activities (see Maps 9.2 and 9.3 for locations of existing permitted cafés and farmers markets).  
~~913.1~~915.3

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

Proposed Amendments

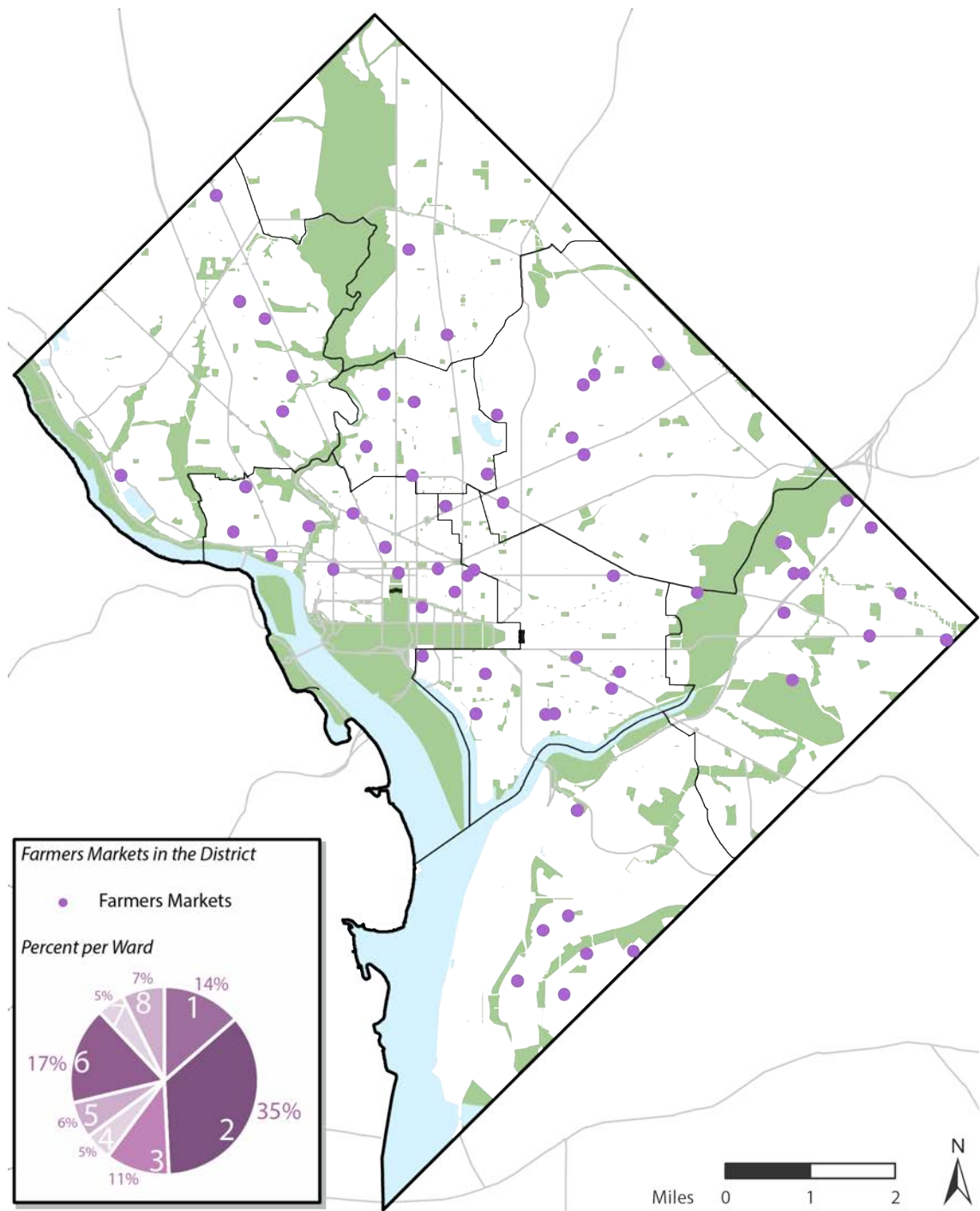
**915.4      Map 9.2: Locations of Sidewalk Cafés 915.4**



# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

Proposed Amendments

**915.5      Map 9.3: Locations of Farmers Markets 915.5**



# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

- 913.2 ~~The design of street space affects pedestrian safety and comfort. Changes to street and sidewalk width, parking configuration, crosswalks, intersections, and signals can improve the pedestrian environment. Well-defined edges and limited openings create a sense of enclosure which can make a street more animated and comfortable (see the text box below on street walls). Street trees, street furniture (benches, trash receptacles, lighting, etc.), well-designed buildings, and active ground floor uses also contribute to the experience of walking, cycling, and driving, down a street or thoroughfare. Planning for streets and sidewalks must recognize the value of such spaces as public amenities, especially in high-density neighborhoods that lack access to parks, open space, and yards. 913.2~~
- 913.3 ~~Street Walls~~  
~~“Street walls” refer to the facades of the various buildings that face a street. They shape the level of visual interest on each block, and create a sense of enclosure for travelers. High-quality architecture and landscaping can enhance the visual impact of the street wall and increase its economic value.~~  
  
~~Washington has a range of block and building types, creating a variety of street wall qualities. For example, streetwalls in rowhouse neighborhoods are defined by many narrow, repetitive buildings with multiple ground-floor entrances. The transformation of the U Street corridor shows how adaptable this form can be, and how well it can accommodate mixed uses and infill development.~~  
  
~~In contrast, K Street and other parts of Downtown Washington are characterized by very large buildings, with only a few facades per block. The resulting street walls are less forgiving. In these types of settings, it is critical that the lower floors provide more architectural detail and varied street-level uses to improve visual interest. Policies that encourage a higher standard of storefront design, and richer, more durable building materials can have a tremendous effect on street wall success. 913.3~~
- 913.4 ~~The management of the space between the curb and the street wall should be guided by a number of objectives. As noted in the Environmental Protection Element, these include expanded street tree planting and the use of “low impact development” methods to reduce stormwater runoff. 913.4~~
- 913.5 ~~“Activating” the street is another important objective especially on neighborhood shopping streets. In many cities renowned for successful street life, there is an active relationship between interior and outdoor spaces. Lively sidewalk cafes, outdoor restaurant seating, and vendor shopping on the street can create a sense of commercial energy that is lacking on many streets in the District today. Streets can also be activated through complementary ground floor uses (such as retail rather than offices) and a high level of transparency and window space (see Figure 9.17). Similarly, residential streets can be animated through the use of porches, terraces, bay windows, stoops, and other architectural projections. 913.5~~



# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

- 913.6 ~~Figure 9.17: Desirable Ground Floor Retail Configuration~~
- 913.7 ~~The need for streetscape improvements varies from one neighborhood to the next. Some neighborhoods have greater needs because they have greater density, greater traffic volumes, or larger numbers of children, seniors, and others with special mobility needs. Other neighborhoods may have serious deficiencies in the street environment that contribute to physical decline. Improving the streetscape can send a powerful message to residents, encourage private investment, and allay further economic and social deterioration. Likewise, the level of streetscape maintenance is one of the most important indicators of neighborhood upkeep. Maintenance across the city should be more consistent in the future, with all neighborhoods receiving the same high level of attention. 913.7~~
- 913.8 ~~*Policy UD-3.1.1: Improving Streetscape Design*  
Improve the appearance and identity of the District's streets through the design of street lights, paved surfaces, landscaped areas, bus shelters, street "furniture", and adjacent building facades. 913.8~~
- 913.9 ~~*Policy UD-3.1.2: Management of Sidewalk Space*  
Preserve the characteristically wide sidewalks of Washington's commercial districts. Sidewalk space should be managed in a way that promotes pedestrian safety, efficiency, comfort, and provides adequate space for tree boxes. Sidewalks should enhance the visual character of streets, with landscaping and buffer planting used to reduce the impacts of vehicle traffic. 913.9~~
- 913.10 ~~*Policy UD-3.1.3: Streetscape Design and Street Function*  
Use variations in lighting and landscaping to highlight and clarify the function of different streets. The design features of streets should make the city's circulation system easier to navigate and understand for residents and visitors. 913.10~~
- 913.11 ~~*Policy UD-3.1.4: Street Lighting*  
Provide street lighting that improves public safety while also contributing to neighborhood character and image. 913.11~~
- 913.12 ~~*Policy UD-3.1.5: Streetscape and Mobility*  
Ensure that the design of public space facilitates connections between different modes of travel, including walking, public transit, bicycling, and driving. Transit shelters, benches, bicycle parking, safe pedestrian connections, and clear way-finding signage should be provided to facilitate multi-modal travel." 913.12~~
- 913.13 ~~*Policy UD-3.1.6: Enhanced Streetwalls*  
Promote a higher standard of storefront design and architectural detail along the District's commercial streets. Along walkable shopping streets, create street walls~~

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

~~with relatively continuous facades built to the front lot line in order to provide a sense of enclosure and improve pedestrian comfort. 913.13~~

913.14 *Policy UD-3.1.7: Improving the Street Environment*

~~Create attractive and interesting commercial streetscapes by promoting ground level retail and desirable street activities, making walking more comfortable and convenient, ensuring that sidewalks are wide enough to accommodate pedestrian traffic, minimizing curb cuts and driveways, and avoiding windowless facades and gaps in the street wall. 913.14~~

913.15 *Policy UD-3.1.8: Neighborhood Public Space*

~~Provide urban squares, public plazas, and similar areas that stimulate vibrant pedestrian street life and provide a focus for community activities. Encourage the “activation” of such spaces through the design of adjacent structures; for example, through the location of shop entrances, window displays, awnings, and outdoor dining areas. 913.15~~

913.16 *Policy UD-3.1.9: Street Closures*

~~Strongly discourage the closure of streets for private ownership or use. Any request for street closure should be reviewed in terms of the resulting impacts on vehicular and pedestrian circulation, access to private property, emergency access and fire protection, view obstruction, loss of open space, building scale, and other factors. 913.16~~

913.17 *Policy UD-3.1.10: Sidewalk Cafes*

~~Discourage the enclosure of sidewalk cafes in a manner that effectively transforms them into indoor floor space. The design of sidewalk cafes should be compatible with the architectural qualities of the adjoining buildings, should complement the street environment, and should not impede pedestrian movement. 913.17~~

913.18 *Policy UD-3.1.11: Private Sector Streetscape Improvements*

~~As appropriate and necessary, require streetscape improvements by the private sector in conjunction with development or renovation of adjacent properties. 913.18~~

913.19 *Policy UD-3.1.12: Programming of Outdoor Space*

~~Encourage the programming of outdoor space with events and activities (such as performances, arts, and farmers markets) that stimulate streetlife and active use. 913.19~~

913.20 *Policy UD-3.1.13: Signage*

~~Encourage high standards of signage throughout the District, particularly for signs that designate landmarks, historic districts, and other areas of civic importance. 913.20~~

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

~~See the Environmental Protection Element for policies on street tree planting.~~

- 915.6**      ***Policy UD-3.1.1: Freely Accessible Public Space***  
**All peoples should have the ability to enjoy public life, express their culture, and feel safe in public space. There should be low barriers for peaceable assembly and free expression in existing public spaces, and new public spaces should be designed to support a mix of activities and users. 915.6**
- 915.7**      ***Policy UD-3.1.2: Security Features in Public Space***  
**Avoid the placement of security barriers within public space. Where security barriers in public space are deemed absolutely necessary, they should be minimally designed or directly incorporated into the streetscape through reinforced pedestrian fixtures such as benches, stairways, or bike racks, and through elements that also contribute to the beauty of a street, such as planter boxes or other landscape features. Retractable vehicle barriers, guard booths, and long lines of bollards should be avoided. 915.7**
- 915.8**      ***Policy UD-3.1.3: Public Spaces for Cultural Expression***  
**Encourage the programming of streets and other outdoor spaces with cultural and community events and activities (such as open streets, performances, public art, festivals, and farmers markets) that stimulate street life and allow public expression of neighborhood culture. 915.8**
- 915.9**      ***Policy UD-3.1.4: Markets for Small and Local Businesses***  
**Use public spaces to support the creation of temporary markets and vending to both expand opportunities for small and local businesses and encourage more active use of public spaces. 915.9**
- 915.10**      ***Policy UD-3.1.5: Sidewalk Culture***  
**Encourage the use and expansion of sidewalk cafes throughout the District through more efficient and quicker permit processes, while discouraging the enclosure of sidewalk cafes that effectively transforms them into private indoor space. The design of sidewalk cafes should complement the street environment and not impede pedestrian movement. 915.10**
- 915.11**      ***Policy UD-3.1.6: Digital Public Life***  
**Support the District's urban design and public life goals through the use of emerging interactive technologies. Enhance community engagement through place-based interactive surveys. Improve resident knowledge of local architecture and heritage, and expand information distribution for upcoming programming and events. 915.11**

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

- 913.21 ~~*Action UD-3.1.A: DC Department of Transportation (DDOT) Design and Engineering Manual*~~  
~~Update the DDOT Design and Engineering Manual (the “Red Book”) to ensure that it more effectively promotes the goal of creating a safe, attractive, and pedestrian-friendly street environment.~~ 913.21 **Completed – See Implementation Table.**
- 913.22 ~~*Action UD-3.1.B: Streetscape Improvement Programs*~~  
~~Maintain capital funding to upgrade the visual quality of District streets through programs such as Restore DC (Main Streets), Great Streets, and the DDOT Urban Forestry program.~~ 913.22 **Completed – See Implementation Table.**
- 913.23 ~~*Action UD-3.1.C: DDOT Public Space Permits*~~  
~~Ensure that all public space permits, including but not limited to permits for dumpsters, electric wiring, tree removal, excavation, parking, fences, retaining walls, signs and banners, sidewalk cafés, curb cuts, and special displays, are not inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan and contribute to the policies laid out above for the use of street space.~~ 913.23 **Completed – See Implementation Table.**
- 913.24 ~~*Action UD-3.1.D: Paving of Front Yards*~~  
~~Consider amendments to zoning regulations and public space guidelines that would limit the paving of front yard areas for parking and other purposes.~~ 913.24 **Completed – See Implementation Table.**
- 913.25 **915.12** ~~*Action UD-3.1.EA: Street Vending*~~  
~~Review the Assess street vending, and sidewalk café, and parklet usage regulations to ensure that they are to be responsive to the goals of creating lively and animated neighborhood streets but and also adequately protect public safety and movement.~~ 913.25 **915.12**
- 913.26 ~~*Action UD-3.1.F: Sign Regulations*~~  
~~Revise the sign regulations to improve the appearance and design of signs, and ensure that signs contribute to overall identity and sense of place while also expressing the unique identities of individual businesses.~~ 913.26 **Completed – See Implementation Table.**
- 915.13** ~~*Action UD-3.1.B: Reduce Barriers to Permitting of Public Space*~~  
**Reduce procedural barriers for neighborhood and civic-oriented uses of public space. Such uses may include both one-time and recurring events, such as festivals and farmers markets, and longer-term installations, such as parklets and plazas. 915.13**
- 915.14** ~~*Action UD-3.1.C: State of Public Life Report*~~  
**Create a report benchmarking the progress in expanding public life across**

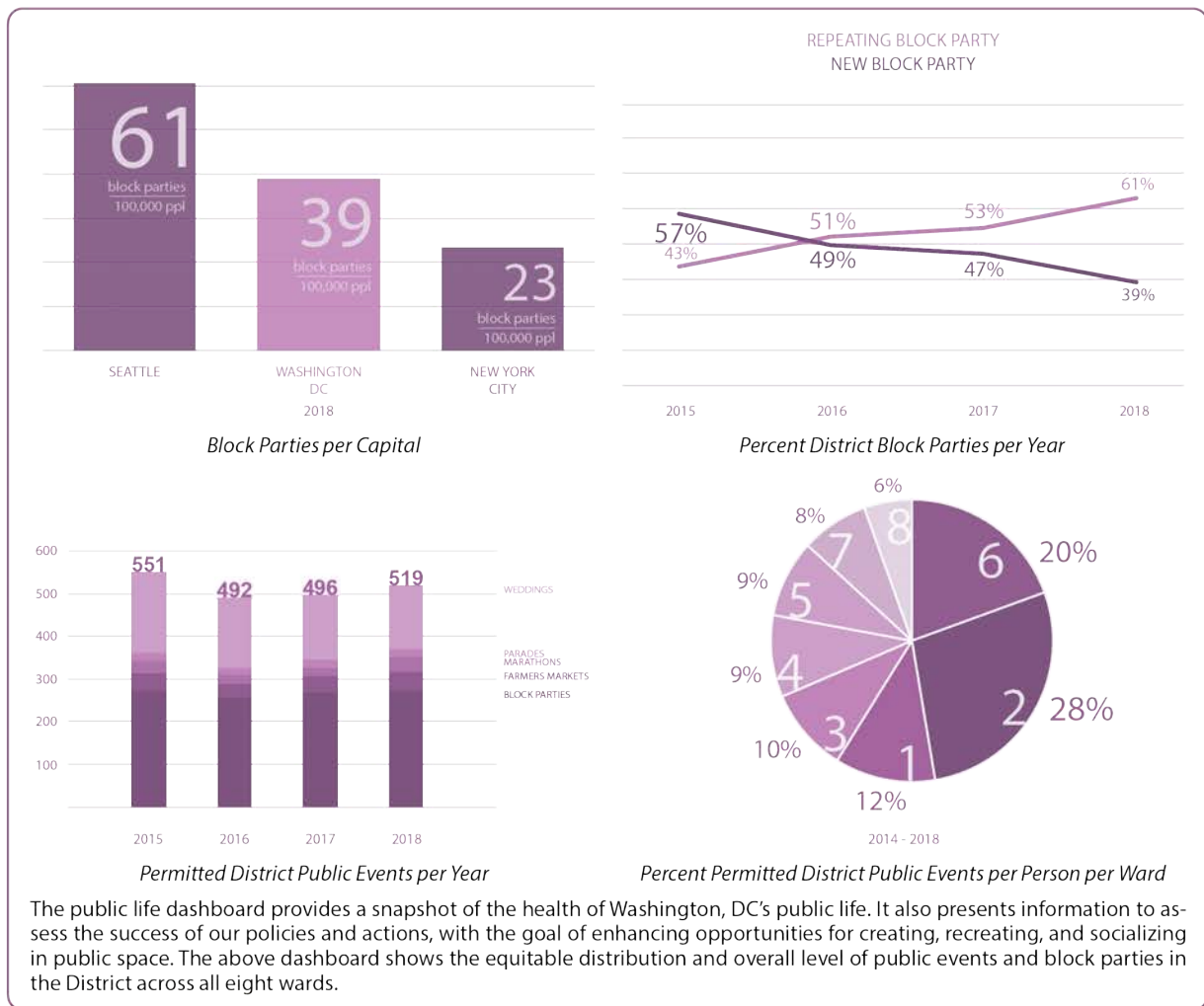
# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

**Washington, DC as part of the Comprehensive Plan amendment cycle. The report would track aspects of public life, including the annual number of community and special events, outdoor café seating, free speech activities, vending licenses, and use counts of major public spaces and streets. See Figure 9.20 for an example of public life event data. 915.14**

**915.15**

**Figure 9.20: Public Life Dashboard of Permitted Events 915.15**



**915.16**

### **Action UD-3.1.D: Digital Public Realm Initiative**

**As a pilot test, develop online tools to collect and share data about public life consistent with appropriate privacy protections. Leverage aggregated information from personal mobile devices and from smart-city infrastructure to better understand how the public realm is used to inform policies and**



# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

actions that improve public space design, increase physical connectivity, improve access to amenities and local businesses, improve wayfinding, and disseminate real-time information to residents about events, public gatherings, and security concerns. 915.16

~~914~~ 916 UD-3.2 Designing the Active District ~~Balancing Security and Civic Life~~

~~914.1~~ 916.1 The design of a city can influence how its residents use it. Physical activity can be fostered by designing spaces and streets that encourage walking, bicycling, and other forms of active movement and recreation. Active urban design entails several strategies. Recent research has demonstrated that a diverse mix of land uses, a well-connected street system, and a good public transit system all tend to increase physical activity among residents. The organization and location of parks, playgrounds, and plazas can also make active recreation opportunities more accessible to children and their families. Placing food markets and other healthy food options throughout the District can increase convenient and equitable food access and promote healthy eating. Complete streets can encourage walking and bicycling among young and older adults alike by developing safe, vibrant, and accessible streetscapes. Furthermore, streets that are safe for all will encourage more active use. Many of these active design strategies will benefit not only the health of District residents but also the environment, as they spur fewer vehicle miles traveled and better air quality. 916.1

916.2 The following policy section offers several specific planning and design strategies that can promote physical activity. The policies address both public- and private sector projects, ranging from the design of neighborhoods to the design of streets. ~~Security has always been a factor in the design and development of Washington, DC, particularly around government and military facilities. The influence of security on the landscape has taken on new significance in the last five years, however. Some of the anti-terrorism measures implemented since 2001 have adversely affected the visual quality of the city. For example, the barriers around the city's monuments and closure of key streets around the US Capitol convey a harsh and militaristic image that detracts from the beauty of the city's most important structures. 914.1~~ 916.2

~~914.2~~ The reality is that security-conscious design is here to stay. The challenge facing the city now is to accommodate security needs without conveying the image of a city under siege. The National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC), General Services Administration, National Park Service, and other federal agencies have been advocating for design solutions that balance security and aesthetic needs; the Pennsylvania Avenue plaza north of the White House is a good example. Additional measures to integrate security measures more sensitively into the permanent design of streets and open spaces will be put in place by the federal government during the coming years. 914.2

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

- ~~914.3 Security needs also affect the design of many government buildings, and even the allowable mix of uses inside those buildings. Depending on their security designations, certain federal facilities are subject to very large setback requirements, limits on ground floor retail uses and public access, and restrictions on building openings and entrances. In some settings, these restrictions are at odds with the goal of creating pedestrian-friendly streets and animated public spaces. 914.3~~
- ~~914.4 Through coordinated planning and design, the District and NCPC are pursuing methods to plan buildings, streets, and other aspects of the public realm in a manner that responds to homeland security needs without impacting the vitality of street life. This may mean that uses with higher security requirements are located on federal enclaves like the Naval Security Station and Bolling Air Force Base, while those with lower security requirements may remain downtown. 914.4~~
- ~~914.5 The city's goals for crime prevention also have an important link to urban design. New development should be consciously designed to focus "eyes on the street" and avoid creating places conducive to criminal activity. This has been one of the major goals of the federal HOPE VI program and the city's New Communities Initiative. The elimination of confusing internal street patterns and dead ends, upgrading of pedestrian walkways, use of appropriate landscaping, and creation of appealing, well-lighted public spaces can all work to effectively enhance public safety. 914.5~~
- 916.3** ***Policy UD 3.2.1: Buildings that Enable Social Interaction***  
**Residential building design should provide opportunities and spaces for interaction, such as open-air porch entrances, balconies, front stoops, and shared yards. Large multi-family buildings should prioritize individual, ground-level entrances to units that open up to the street in addition to interior access to units through a shared private lobby. 916.3**
- 916.4** ***Policy UD 3.2.2: Social and Community Meeting Spaces***  
**New planned unit developments (PUDs) and other large-scale developments should provide for a mix of social and third spaces—for example, schools, retail stores, cultural and community spaces, and recreational facilities. 916.4**
- 916.5** ***Policy UD 3.2.3: Recreational Space Design for Large Site Development***  
**Design open spaces conducive to physical activity as part of large-scale developments or create new recreation spaces (such as parks, walking paths, trails, and waterfront recreation) in neighborhoods lacking access to public open spaces. 916.5**

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

- 916.6** *Policy UD 3.2.4: Pedestrian-Convenient Transit*  
Incorporate design interventions to make transit stops friendly to users and encourage public life and pedestrian activity. Bus stop shelters should protect users from sun, wind, and rain; furnish adequate seating; and build connections between transit stops and adjacent plazas or parks. 916.6
- ~~914.6~~ ~~*Policy UD 3.2.1: Federal Collaboration*~~  
~~Collaborate with the federal government to plan for security and safety throughout the District without diminishing urban design quality and livability. Security needs should be considered from the beginning of the design process to ensure less intrusive and less disruptive solutions.~~ 914.6
- ~~914.7~~ ~~*Policy UD 3.2.2: Location of High-Security Uses*~~  
~~Avoid the siting of projects with high security requirements in a manner that conflicts with the city's urban design goals. Consider locating high security projects in campus type settings to avoid the negative impacts that might result from their location in areas with active street life.~~ 914.7
- ~~914.8~~ ~~*Policy UD 3.2.3: Site Planning and Design Measures to Increase Security*~~  
~~Encourage architectural design and site planning methods that minimize perimeter security requirements and have a reduced impact on the public realm. Such measures include separating entryways, controlling access, "hardening" of shared walls, and the selection of more resilient building materials.~~ 914.8
- ~~914.9~~ ~~*Policy UD 3.2.4: Security Through Streetscape Design*~~  
~~Develop and apply attractive, context-sensitive security measures in the design of streets, plazas, and public spaces. These measures should use an appropriate mix of bollards, planters, landscaped walls, vegetation, and street furniture rather than barriers and other approaches that detract from aesthetic quality.~~ 914.9
- ~~914.10~~**916.7** *Policy UD-3.2.45: Safe and Active Streets* ~~*Reducing Crime Through Design*~~  
~~Ensure that t~~The design of the built environment should encourages public activity throughout the day and helps minimize the potential for criminal activity. ~~Examples of preventative~~ Design measures include; active building frontages (such as windows, balconies, and frequently spaced entrances) adequate lighting that avoids glare and shadow, maintaining clear lines of sight and visual access, and avoiding dead-end streets. Where feasible consider closing streets to vehicular traffic to enhance pedestrian and cycling uses of streets.  
~~914.10~~**916.7**
- ~~A more attractive solution has been implemented at the Museum of the American Indian, where security and aesthetic needs are successfully balanced. Makeshift security measures such as jersey barriers adversely affect District streets and sidewalks.~~

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

~~914.11~~**916.8** *Action UD-3.2.A: Security-Related Design Guidelines*  
Work collaboratively with ~~the NCPC and other~~ federal agencies to develop design measures which accommodate **public space** security needs **that support** ~~without disallowing~~ ground level **retail activities** and other public space amenities **and special events**. ~~Such measures should include solutions to meet parking and service access needs for ground level retail, and less obtrusive methods of “hardening” buildings and public space.~~ ~~914.11~~**916.8**

~~914.12~~ *Action UD-3.2.B: Neighborhood Public Life Surveys*  
Conduct regular **public life** surveys of **neighborhood main streets with crime and, low economic or pedestrian activity** “hot spots” to identify where urban design issues such as inadequate lighting, **public space and sidewalk design**, and poor circulation may be contributing to high crime rates **and low pedestrian activity**. Implement measures to address these issues through the redesign of streets and public space. **Completed – See Implementation Table.** ~~914.12~~

~~914.13~~ *Action UD-3.2.C: Design Review for Crime Prevention*  
Develop design standards for new neighborhoods, new communities, large tracts, and other major developments which reinforce crime prevention and security objectives. ~~914.13~~ **Obsolete – See Implementation Table.**

*See the Land Use and Transportation Elements for additional policies on street closures for security.*

~~915~~**917** **UD-3.3 Places For Lingerin** ~~The Design of Public Buildings and Infrastructure~~**917**

~~915.1~~**917.1** The District should lead the way to good urban design in the way it designs and builds its own public facilities. The design of civic structures should reinforce the District’s image as a forward-looking city that respects historic context while embracing change and innovation. Each library renovation, fire station addition, school modernization, recreation center construction project, and the like should be viewed as an opportunity to create a great civic building and character defining ~~public~~ **There are many great spaces for people in Washington, DC, such as Columbia Heights Plaza, Friendship (Turtle) Park, and Yards Park, but the vast majority of small parks and plazas are underused spaces that don’t fully serve the recreational or social needs of residents. This is most evident in the design of Metrorail (Metro) stations; a survey of Metro stations (shown in Map 9.4) reveals that only 45 percent have plazas that feature critical elements such as benches or artwork. It is vital that public spaces are designed to invite people to linger and share experiences. Safety, comfort, and pleasure are the key qualities present in all great public spaces and essential conditions for unlocking the potential of small parks and plazas and**

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

**creating a vibrant public life. As new neighborhoods are built or existing public spaces are improved, these design parameters should be consulted to encourage socializing and recreating in the District's open spaces. ~~915.1~~917.1**

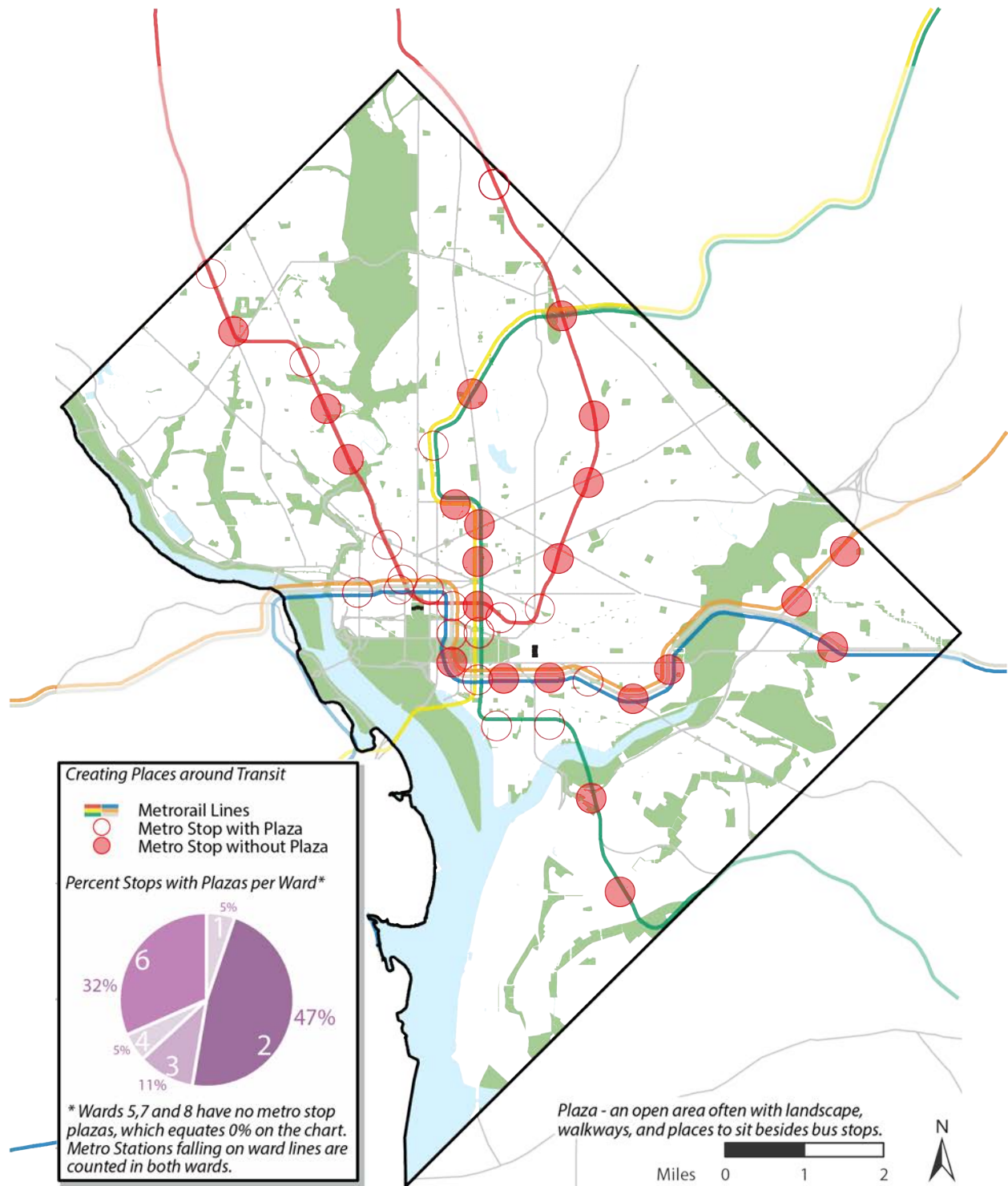


# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

917.2

**Map 9.4: Metrorail Stations with Plazas 917.2**



# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

- ~~915.2 Over the next 20 years, transportation infrastructure will provide some of the city's most important urban design opportunities. The District is already home to one of the world's great train stations (Union Station), and the Metrorail system itself is an acclaimed piece of transportation architecture. The addition of streetcars, bus rapid transit systems, and their associated stations and stopping points will shape the identity of several neighborhoods in the next two decades. Similarly, the rebuilding of the Anacostia River crossings provides an opportunity for new bridges that become symbolic gateways and skyline icons, rather than the concrete viaducts that exist today. 915.2~~
- ~~915.3 *Policy UD-3.3.1: Capital Improvements and Urban Design*  
Use new capital improvement projects as opportunities to establish a positive image in neighborhoods which currently have poor design identity and negative visual character. 915.3~~
- ~~915.4 *Policy UD-3.3.2: Design Excellence in Public Buildings*  
Require design excellence for all public buildings and public space, with government leading by example to create a more attractive environment in the city and its neighborhoods. Important civic places, such as schools and libraries, should be individually designed to foster community identity and neighborhood character. 915.4~~
- ~~915.5 *Policy UD-3.3.3: Design of New Public Transit*  
Treat the design of mass transit systems as an important form of public architecture. Transit shelters, waiting platforms, signage, off-board fare collection, on-street bicycle facilities, pedestrian connections, and other improvements should contribute to citywide urban design goals. 915.5~~
- ~~915.6 *Policy UD-3.3.4: Metro Station Entrances*  
Promote design improvements and public art at transit station entrances and transit stops, providing a stronger sense of arrival and orientation for travelers. 915.6~~
- ~~915.7 *Policy UD-3.3.5: Design of Bridges and Infrastructure*  
Promote high quality design and engineering in all infrastructure projects, including bridges and other public works projects. 915.7~~
- 917.3 *Policy UD-3.3.1: Neighborhood Meeting Places***  
**Provide places for neighborhood public life through the creation of public plazas at existing Metro stations or urban squares in new development. Encourage the activation of such spaces through the design of adjacent structures, including the location of shop entrances, window displays, awnings, and outdoor dining areas. 917.3**

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

- 917.4**      ***Policy UD-3.3.2: Small Parks for Recreation***  
**Leverage small parks, including triangle parks, linear parks, and medians, to serve as places for recreation, community gathering, and play by encouraging greater resident and community design and management of these spaces through grant and partnership programs. 917.4**
- 917.5**      ***UD-3.3.3: Plazas for Diverse Uses***  
**Design plazas to accommodate physical activities like dancing or ball play, passive activities like sitting and chess, and cultural events like concerts, exhibits, and historical celebrations. Plazas can also provide space for cafe-style seating and farmers markets. When programming plazas, consider the needs of users with varying mobility levels. 917.5**
- 917.6**      ***Policy UD-3.3.4: Plaza Design for Weather Conditions***  
**Design plazas to include sunny areas protected from the wind for use in the colder seasons, shaded areas for use in hot, sunny weather, and slick-proof surfaces with excellent drainage for storm events to facilitate year-round use. 917.6**
- 917.7**      ***Policy UD-3.3.5: Design for Safety***  
**Design parks and plazas to promote safety from crime and injury through clear sightlines in and out of public spaces, maintaining a state of good repair of sidewalks and pathways, encouraging community stewardship, and inviting evening use through programming and well-designed lighting. 917.7**
- 917.8**      ***Action UD-3.3.A: Cross-Agency Small Parks Partnership Program***  
**Develop a community partnership program that includes the DC Department of Transportation (DDOT), the DC Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), and the DC Department of General Services (DGS) to improve and activate small parks through a combination of landscaping, recreation amenities, signage, and street design that contributes to neighborhood recreation, definition, and identity. 917.8**
- 917.9**      ***Action UD-3.3.B: Transfer of NPS Triangle Parks to the District***  
**Work with NPS to identify and transfer key small parks in NPS's ownership to the District to enhance community use, programming, and stewardship. 917.9**
- 917.10**      ***Action UD-3.3.C: Design Standards for Public Space Design***  
**Create public space design guidelines for District-controlled parks and plazas that highlight designing for diverse cultural uses, placemaking, and socializing. 917.10**
- 916****918**      **UD-4 Making Great Urban Architecture** ~~Design Matter~~ **918**

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

~~916.1~~**918.1** ~~The final section of the Urban Design Element includes program recommendations relating to urban design. The focus is on the expanded use of design guidelines and design review procedures to improve architectural quality in the city.~~ **While a city is made up of more than its buildings, its image is often linked to its architectural expression. This is especially true in a capital city like Washington, DC, which must balance its roles as a national emblem and a city of neighborhoods. As an intentionally planned capital starting with L’Enfant’s Plan of the City of Washington, architects, landscape architects, and urban designers have given a special emphasis to street corridors, axial vistas, and buildings to punctuate monuments and support the plan’s broader vision. Eventually, a series of height acts and various zoning regulations gave three-dimensional form to Washington, DC, giving it a distinct horizontality that emphasizes the more vertical prominence of civic landmarks. Washington, DC is more than a capital city of grand proportions and axial formality. Its architectural legacy includes multiple scales: the finer-grained expression of bay window projections, tower elements, varied storefronts, and smaller-scale institutional buildings shaped by time-tested building codes and public space regulations.** ~~916.1~~**918.1**

~~916.2~~**918.2** ~~Currently, the level of design review varies from one part of the District to the next. In the heart of the city, new projects undergo extraordinary scrutiny—the design of monuments, museums, and federal buildings is even the subject of Congressional debate. The US Commission of Fine Arts is charged with reviewing the design of all public buildings, and private buildings adjacent to public buildings and grounds of major importance. Since the passage of the Shipstead Luce Act in 1930, the CFA has had the authority to review construction which fronts or abuts the grounds of the US Capitol and White House, the Downtown portion of Pennsylvania Avenue, the Southwest waterfront, and most of the National Park Service lands. The National Capital Planning Commission, likewise, evaluates the design of projects affecting the federal interest and may require modifications to improve architectural character and quality. NCPC reviews District of Columbia public projects (such as schools) and all projects on federal lands, and provides “in lieu of zoning” review for public projects in the city center.~~ **Moving forward, consideration should be given to balancing the design traditions of civic decorum with a new focus on buildings that embrace sustainability, design excellence, and beauty while celebrating the District’s residents by amplifying public life. Civic buildings should be community icons, and transportation infrastructure should be celebratory and inspiring. As development continues on waterfronts and signature sites, there are opportunities to create dynamic and contemporary places with greater innovation and creativity.** ~~916.2~~**918.2**

~~916.3~~ Architectural excellence at the ARC (Town Hall Education Arts & Recreation Campus) on Mississippi Avenue SE. The District of Columbia government’s

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

~~design review programs have traditionally been oriented to historic districts. Illustrative design guidelines have been prepared for historic districts, addressing windows, doors, roofs, foundations, walls, porches, steps, landscaping, and many other aspects of building and site design. As described in the Historic Preservation Element, the Historic Preservation Office and/or the Historic Preservation Review Board review thousands of permit applications for exterior alterations, additions, and new construction each year. The result is a high level of design integrity, which in turn has contributed to the value and economic importance of Washington's historic districts. 916.3~~

~~916.4 In much of the city, however, design review requirements are minimal. Many projects are approved with a simple building permit, without an appraisal of their design impacts. The design of larger projects is routinely considered by the Zoning Commission, but in many cases without formal guidelines. Similarly, the city's 37 Advisory Neighborhood Commissions weigh in on the design of many large-scale projects and public space permits, often suggesting changes that are incorporated by applicants. However, the process is ad hoc and the level of input varies from one ANC to the next. A more systematic and balanced approach to design review across the city would be helpful. 916.4~~

~~916.5 While the following policies do not recommend mandatory design review in all parts of the city, they do suggest a higher level of review than is occurring today. This is especially important in parts of the city where a large amount of infill development may take place in the next 20 years, including neighborhoods east of the Anacostia River. Increases in public outreach, education, and design assistance will be needed as design review initiatives expand. Staff resources will also need to increase, to avoid delays in permit processing and ensure programs are properly administered and enforced. All policies should be implemented following consultation with affected communities. 916.5~~

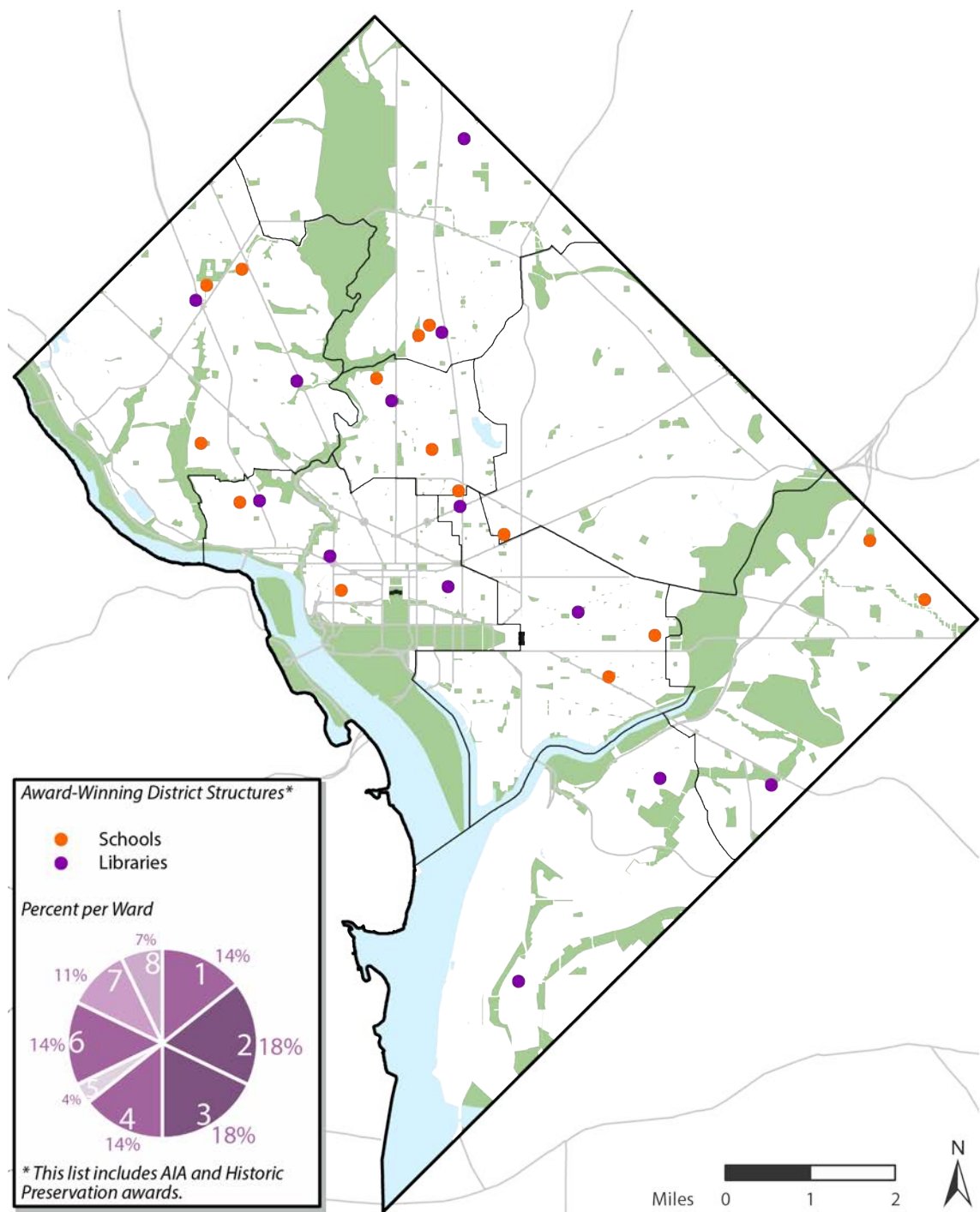
## 919 UD-4.1 The Design of Public Buildings, Public Spaces, and Infrastructure 919

919.1 The design of new civic architecture and infrastructure reinforces the District's image as a forward-looking city that supports civic engagement and respects historic context while embracing change and innovation. Each library renovation, fire station addition, school modernization, park renovation, streetscape project, and recreation center construction project is an opportunity to create a great civic asset that contributes to neighborhood livability, collective resident pride in civic institutions, and the District's status as a national capital. The District has intentionally worked over the last 15 years to equitably build award-winning civic buildings in all eight wards (see Map 9.5). The District can continue to lead by example by actively seeking an agenda of sustainable design excellence across all agencies. 919.1

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

Proposed Amendments

**919.2      Map 9.5 Award-Winning District Architecture 919.2**





# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

- 919.3** Over the next 20 years, transportation infrastructure projects will provide some of Washington, DC’s most important urban design opportunities through the reconstruction of transportation corridors, bridges, and upgraded systems. Within the District, Union Station is one of the world’s great train stations and the Metro system itself is an iconic piece of transportation architecture. The integration of new bicycle, high-capacity transit, and other modes into the transportation system, along with the reconstruction of connections across the Anacostia River and other physical boundaries, will shape the identity of the District and its neighborhoods for decades to come. 919.3
- 919.4** *Policy UD 4.1.1: Capital Improvements and Urban Design*  
Use new capital improvement projects as opportunities to strengthen the District’s urban design vision. Important community-serving civic places, such as schools and libraries, should be designed as civic icons with a high level of architectural quality, enhancing neighborhood identity and promoting the pride of residents and the admiration of visitors at both the neighborhood and District-wide level. 919.4
- 919.5** *Policy UD 4.1.2: Design Excellence*  
Promote design excellence contracting processes in District capital improvement projects for public buildings and public spaces to promote a more attractive, functional, and sustainable environment in the District and its neighborhoods. 919.5
- 919.6** *Policy UD-4.1.3: Design of New Public Transit*  
Design transit system elements as an important component of public architecture. Elements including transit shelters, waiting platforms, signage, off-board fare collection, bicycle-sharing facilities, and other improvements should contribute to meeting District-wide urban design goals. 919.6
- 919.7** *Policy UD 4.1.4: Metro Station Entrances*  
Promote design improvements and public art at Metro station entrances and other transit hubs to provide a stronger sense of arrival and orientation for travelers and contribute to neighborhood identity. 919.7
- 919.8** *Policy UD-4.1.5: Design of Bridges and Other Transportation Infrastructure*  
Promote high-quality design and environmentally advanced engineering that accommodates various modes of transportation and supports public life, natural ecology, and civic identity in all infrastructure projects, including bridges and other public works projects. 919.8

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

- 919.9**      ***Policy UD-4.1.6: Infrastructure Reuse Projects***  
**Continue to explore creative reuse of obsolete District infrastructure facilities, including transportation and utility structures, to address current needs for new types of public spaces and recreational facilities. 919.9**
- 919.10**      ***Policy UD-4.1.7: Design for Longevity***  
**Public buildings and infrastructure should be designed to be aesthetically pleasing with the highest quality and durable building materials providing long-term appearance and functionality and to minimize energy usage and maintenance needs. 919.10**
- ~~916.7      *Policy UD-4.1.2: Design Review*  
Support expanded design review programs in the District, with a priority on areas not currently protected by historic district designation. 916.7~~
- ~~916.8      *Policy UD-4.1.3: Design Assistance*  
Encourage the use of technical assistance programs to educate and inform the public about design guidelines and to promote higher quality design. 916.8~~
- ~~916.9      *Policy UD-4.1.4: Creating A Design Culture*  
Create an enhanced design culture in Washington through educational programs, museum exhibitions, design competitions, and school curricula. Pursue collaborations with the National Building Museum, the American Institute of Architects, and other professional design organizations to promote a broader public discourse on major urban design issues. 916.9~~
- ~~916.10      *Policy UD-4.1.5: Small Area Plans*  
Integrate urban design considerations into small area plans. Consider the use of illustrative design guidelines and place specific urban design standards as part of these plans. 916.10~~
- ~~916.11      *Action UD-4.1.A: DC Urban Design Agenda*  
Prepare an “Urban Design Agenda” for the District of Columbia that articulates and illustrates citywide design principles for the city and its neighborhoods. 916.11~~
- ~~916.12      *Action UD-4.1.B: Expanding Design Review*  
Conduct an exploratory study on the expansion of design review requirements to areas beyond the city’s historic districts. The study should examine alternative approaches to carrying out design review requirements, including the use of advisory design review boards, and expansion of planning staff to carry out administrative reviews. 916.12: **Completed – See Implementation Table.**~~
- ~~916.13      *Action UD-4.1.C: Review of Zoning Requirements*~~

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

~~Adjust the processes and requirements for planned unit developments, site plans in the R-5-A zone districts, and large tract reviews in order to strengthen design amenities and promote higher design quality. 916.13: Completed – See Implementation Table.~~

919.11

*Action UD-4.1.A: Design Excellence Program for District Facilities*

Develop a Design Excellence Program for architectural/engineering contracting processes for District government-controlled public buildings and public spaces based on the federal General Services Administration Design Excellence Program. 919.11

919.12

*Action UD-4.1.B: Commission of Fine Arts Review of District Government Capital Projects*

Develop guidelines for assisting the Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) design review for any applicable District building and infrastructure projects. These guidelines should reflect the District's urban design goals. 919.12

919.13

*Action UD-4.1.C: Excellence in Urban Design Initiative*

Develop a District-wide Excellence in Urban Design Initiative for the District, including an award program and public education campaign, to make Washington, DC a nationally recognized leader in architecture, landscape, environmental design, historic preservation, and city planning. 919.13

920

UD-4.2 Designing Architecture for People 920

920.1

Buildings and architecture have a direct impact on comfort, sense of safety, and emotional well-being; they form the physical fabric of the District. The quality of the District's physical character should be designed to improve the experience of walking down its streets, create moments of joy and visual delight, and promote a sense of civic pride and order. To achieve this, the relationship of common buildings to the human experience should be closely considered, including the size of buildings, their distance to the sidewalk, the treatment of ground-floor-level points of entry, and the impact of light and air. 920.1

920.2

Experiences are defined by limitations to senses: environments that relate directly to what is comfortably perceived elicit pleasant emotions, while environments that are disorienting or monotonous challenge the senses and can create isolation or discomfort. Humans interact with and understand the surrounding urban environment based on their inherent physical, sensory, and social capabilities:

- Social: distance (intimacy of communication), group sizes, level of activity;
- Physical: walking distances, material size, speed of movement; and

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

- Sensory (visual, auditory, tactile, etc.): craftsmanship and texture, order (scale and hierarchy), visual limits. 920.2

### 920.3

#### *Policy UD-4.2.1: Scale and Massing of Large Buildings*

Design the scale, height, volume, and massing of large buildings to avoid monotony and enhance the human scale. Varied roof heights, facade widths, and more expressive massing can provide variety and visual interest. Massing should be articulated with a special emphasis placed on corners, especially along important view corridors or intersections. Patterns of architectural elements, expressive structure, or other design tactics can provide variety and visual interest. 920.3

### 920.4

#### *Policy UD-4.2.2: Engaging Ground Floors*

Promote a high standard of storefront design and architectural detail in mixed-use buildings to enhance the pedestrian experience of the street. Promote a high degree of visual interest through syncopated storefronts that vary every 20 to 30 feet, provide direct lines of sight to interior social spaces, provide socially oriented uses along the public street, and use tactile, durable materials at the ground level. 920.4

### 920.5

#### *Policy UD-4.2.3: Continuity and Consistency of Building Frontages*

Maintain the established frontage lines of streets by aligning the front walls of new construction with the prevailing facades of adjacent buildings. Avoid placing new construction that extends beyond the existing facade line unless it significantly benefits the public life of the street. Where existing facades are characterized by an established pattern of windows and doors or other elements, new construction should complement the established rhythm. 920.5

### 920.6

#### *Policy UD-4.2.4: Creating Engaging Facades*

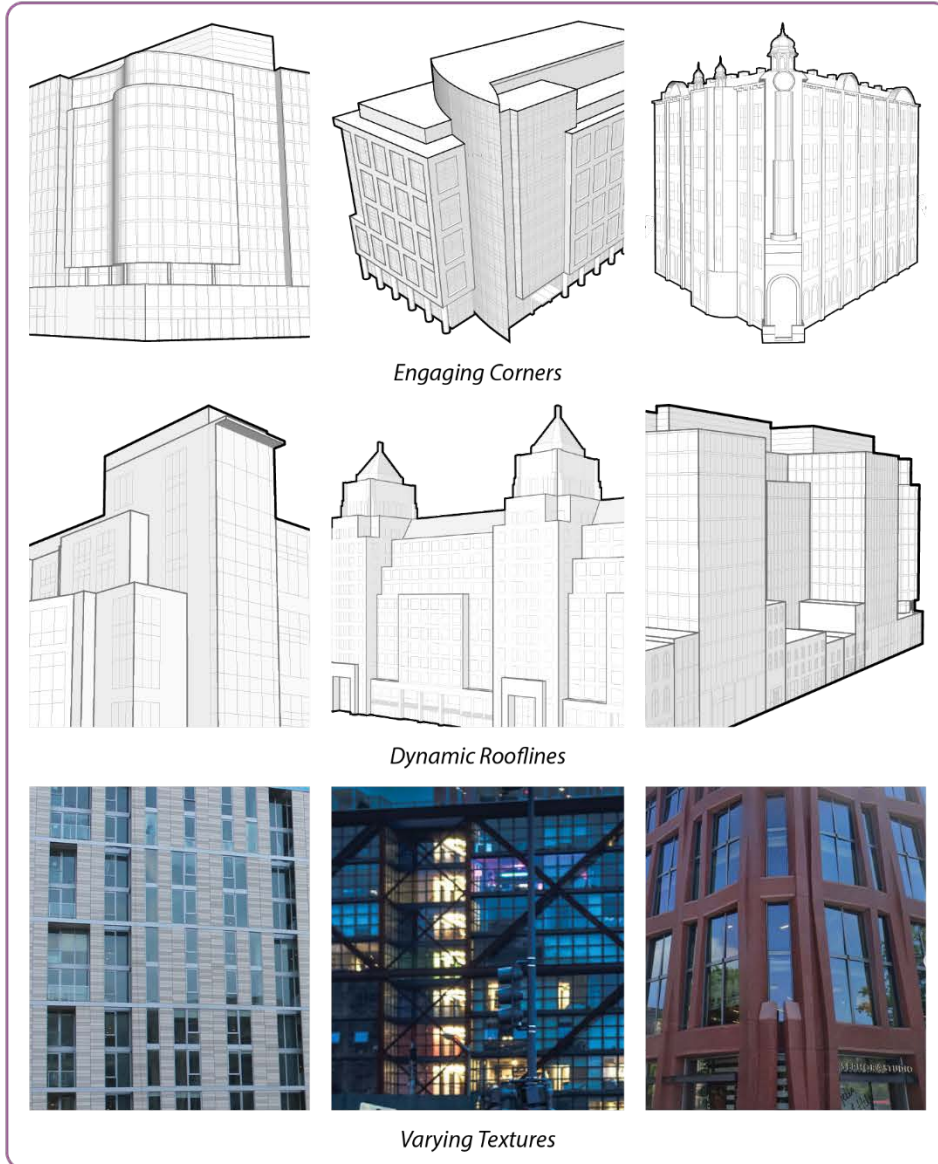
Design new buildings to respond to the surrounding neighborhood fabric by modulating facade rhythms and using complementary materials, textures, and color, as well as well-designed lighting. Varying design tactics may be used to engage a building with its surroundings. In contexts with smaller lot sizes and multiple closely spaced building entrances, breaking up a building facade in the vertical direction is encouraged, along with strongly defined and differentiated bases, centers, and tops of buildings. In areas lacking a strong building-form pattern, the use of complementary or reinterpreted materials and colors could strengthen architectural identity see Figure 9.21 for recommended facade design strategies). 920.6

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

**920.7**

**Figure 9.21: Creating Engaging Facades 920.6**



**920.8**

**Policy UD-4.2.5: Interesting Roof Lines**

**Design architecturally interesting roof lines to help articulate the massing of buildings and add visual appeal. Along commercial streets, tower elements at corners can help define intersections; in more residential neighborhoods, towers and penthouses can help scale and mass buildings to respond to surrounding building scale and mass. 920.8**

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

- 920.9**      ***Policy UD 4.2.6: Active Facades***  
**Prioritize the placement of multiple entrances for new multi-family and mixed-use buildings across the length of a block rather than a single lobby entrance at one location. New residential developments should promote active facades with spaces for social activity, such as porches, stoops, or patios along public streets, to encourage more activity along the sidewalk and increase social interaction in a neighborhood. 920.9**
- 920.10**      ***Action UD-4.2.A: Designing the District for the People Reference Guide***  
**Create a reference guide that catalogues principles of good urban design at a human level. This reference guide should articulate these concepts in a clear manner to be understandable to both the general public and members of the design profession. 920.10**
- 921**            **UD-4.3 Celebrate Washington, DC's Unique Design Legacy 921**
- 921.1**            **Every city has a built form and character that is specific to its sense of place. Like New York City's tiered skyscrapers, San Francisco's Queen Anne row houses, or Boston's brownstones, Washington, DC has its own specific building traditions and character. They are the result of a long history of conscious design goals that have resulted in many defining features of the District. Recognizing their importance, intent, and value is critical to preserving Washington, DC's design legacy, as well as continuing design traditions as the District develops and grows. 921.1**
- 921.2**            **Washington, DC's unique design legacy is far reaching and touches every aspect of the built environment:**
- **A relationship of building heights to street width and setbacks for penthouses create a distinct scale along streets and avenues, as well as architectural opportunity for rooftop expression;**
  - **Public parking and building restriction lines establish a green and park-like area along residential streets;**
  - **Limits on building height give the District its consistent skyline and open look and feel;**
  - **Shop windows, awnings, and wide sidewalks are emblematic of active and inviting commercial areas; and**
  - **Building projections such as porches, bay windows, oriels, and towers embellish buildings and frame picturesque views. 921.2**
- 921.3**            **This design legacy is the result of conscious efforts to shape the District and is created through a number of different regulatory controls, some established for a specific design intent and others for practical reasons. Although they have evolved over time in response to concurrent planning and architectural trends, it is their consistent application that is most important. Their**



# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

continuous use and enforcement has greatly benefited the District and its residents by creating distinct places to live, work, and visit. 921.3

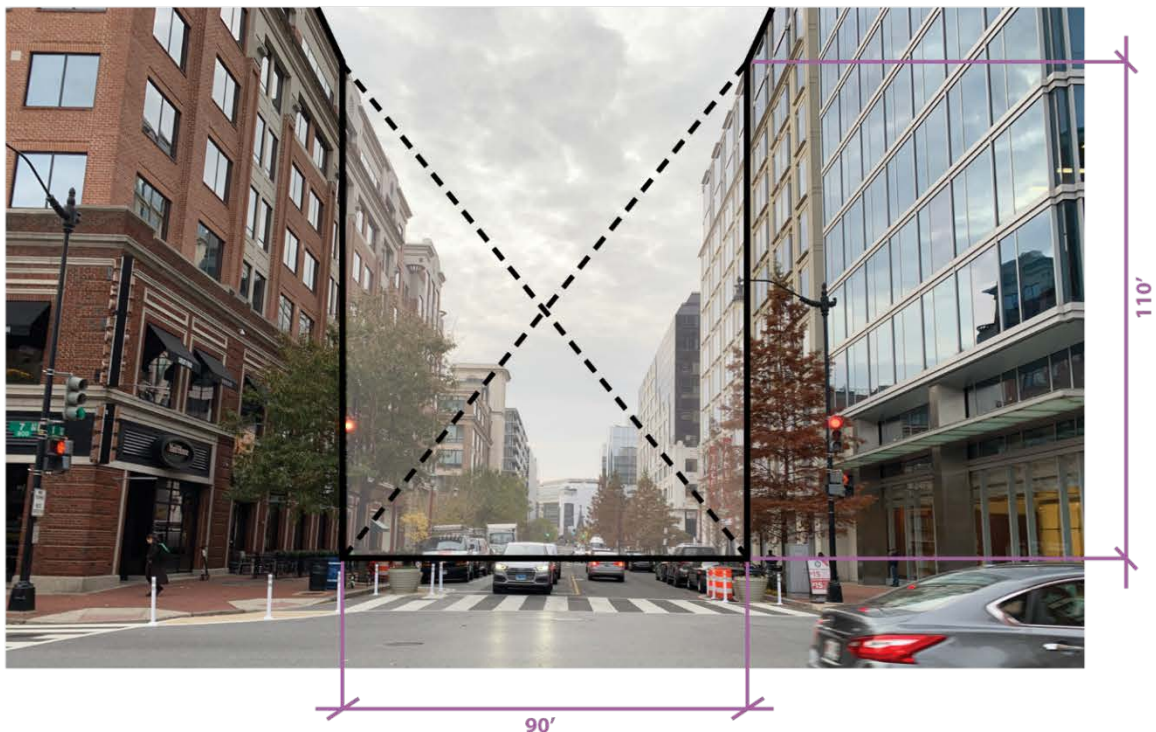
### 921.4

#### *Policy UD-4.3.1: Recognize the Legacy of the Height Act*

Utilize the basic principles for regulating building height by street width in the Height of Buildings Act of 1910 to guide the redevelopment of corridors and new large site developments, continuing Washington, DC's historic design tradition of well-proportioned streets and consistent building heights (see Figure 9.22). Examine opportunities where enabling buildings to exceed zoning height restrictions can encourage better site massing and architectural design. 921.4

### 921.5

#### Figure 9.22: Height Act Diagram 921.5



The *Height of Buildings Act* generally regulates building height based on the width of the street it faces.

For streets with mixed-use and non-residential uses:

**max. building height = street width + 20'**

For streets where only residential uses are permitted the following rules apply:

Maximum building height  
Streets < 60' wide  
Streets 60' - 65' wide  
Streets > 65' wide

**90'**  
**max. building height = street width**  
**max. building height = 60'**  
**max. building height = street width - 10'**

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

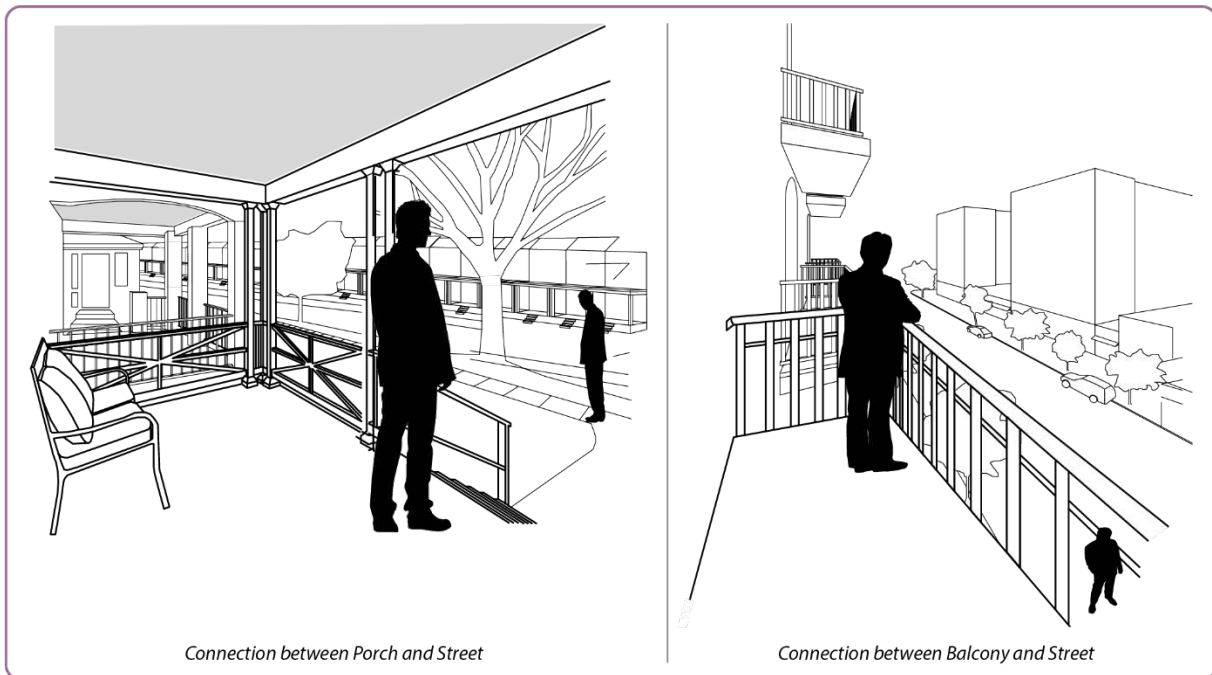
**921.6**

**Policy UD-4.3.2: Building Projections That Shape Urban Form**

**Design building projections to enhance the visual experience of the street and neighborhoods as a whole, as well as add distinct form to individual buildings. Projections should provide design embellishments while respecting the scale of the primary building facade, access to light and air for adjacent properties, and the pedestrian experience of the street (see Figure 9.23). 921.6**

**921.7**

**Figure 9.23: Porches and Balconies 921.7**



**921.8**

**Policy UD-4.3.3: Building Setbacks and Rooflines**

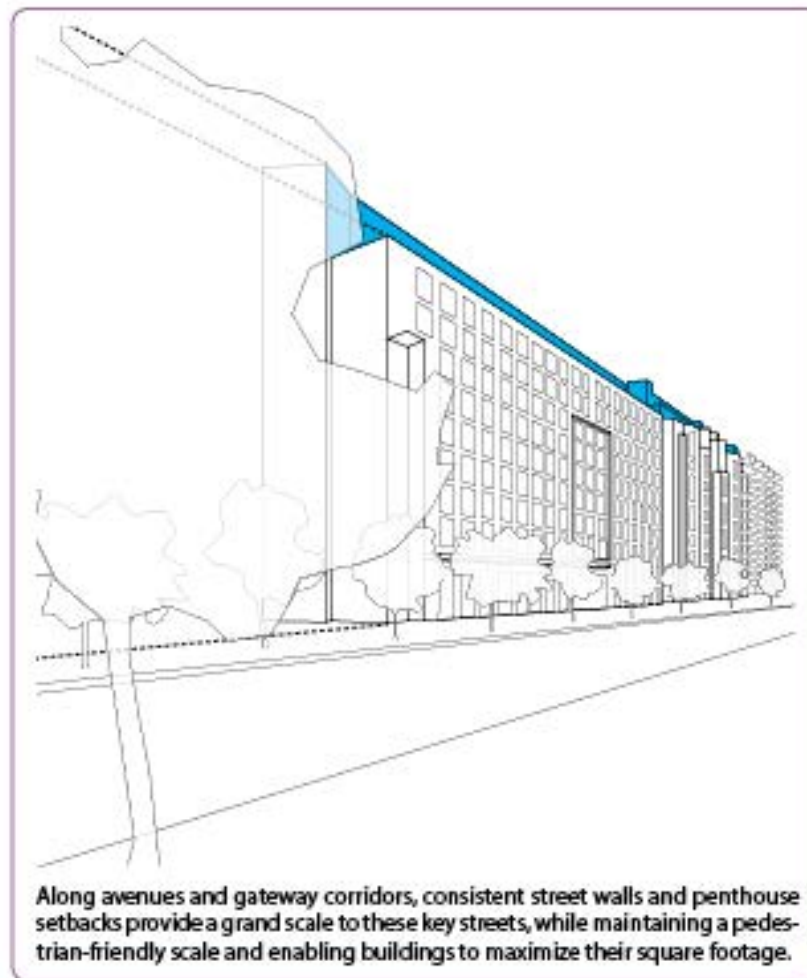
**Maintain uniform building setbacks and roof lines to establish a consistent pattern along avenues and priority view corridors. Setbacks should create a consistent street wall rather than have abrupt disruptions with facades that are set back or extend in front of an established pattern. The treatment of roof lines, such as recessed penthouses or variations created by bay windows and towers, should respond to the predominant character of a corridor. See Figure 9.24 for an example of buildings setbacks and rooflines. 921.8**

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

**921.9**

**Figure 9.24: Building Setbacks 921.9**



**921.10**

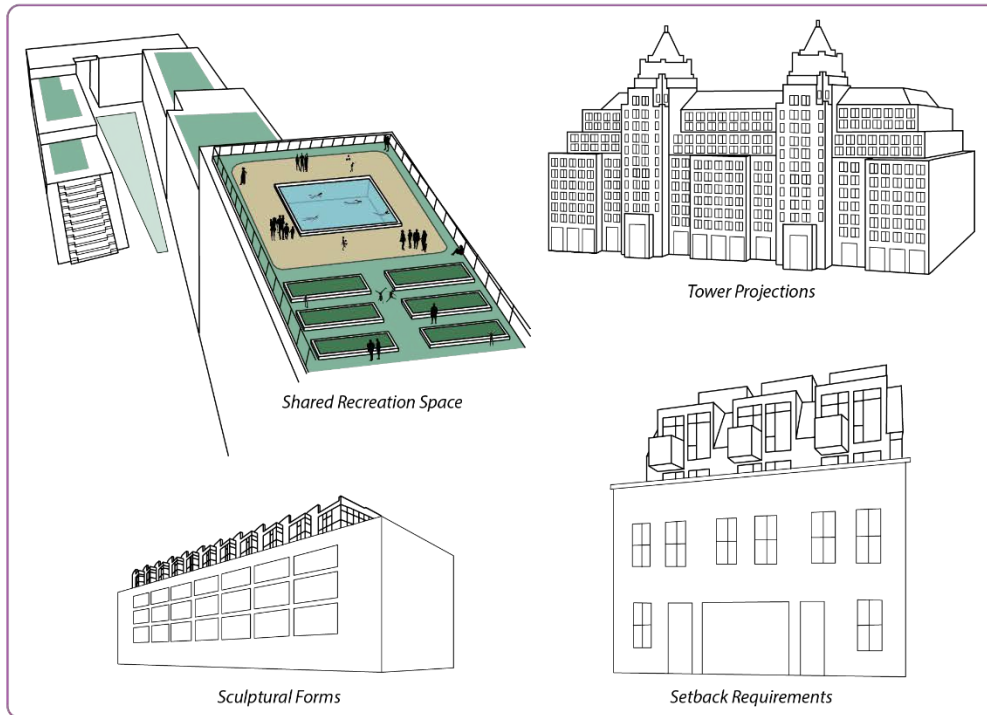
**Policy UD-4.3.4: Rooftop Penthouses**

**Encourage new buildings to maximize the potential of penthouse regulations that allow for greater design flexibility and architectural expression of rooftops. Use penthouses to create shared recreation spaces for building users, using sculptural roof forms. Pay special attention to setback lines and tower projections in designing rooftop treatments. See Figure 9.25 for examples of dynamic rooftops. 921.10**

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

### **921.11**      **Figure 9.25: Dynamic Rooftops 921.11**



**921.12**      ***Policy UD-4.3.5: Building Projections that Promote Interaction***  
**Encourage buildings with public parking along their frontage to use the flexibility of projection regulations for steps, porches, balconies, and awnings and create opportunities for in-between spaces that encourage social interaction and add visual interest to building facades. 921.12**

**921.13**      ***Action UD-4.3.A: Washington, DC Urban Design Guide***  
**Prepare an Urban Design Guide for Washington, DC that compiles the existing codes and regulations that play a role in creating the District's urban design legacy. 921.13**

**921.14**      ***Action UD-4.3.B: Update of the Projection Code***  
**Conduct a comprehensive study and subsequent building code update to address issues of large projections on long building facades that detract from the public realm and monumental character of the District's streets. The study should consider the role projections have played in shaping the form of Washington, DC and assess their intent and how they have evolved over time. 921.14**

# Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element

## Proposed Amendments

**921.15**

**Action UD-4.3.C: Review Zoning Height Restrictions**

**Review the zoning code to determine where it may be more restrictive than the Height Act to identify the potential capacity for more affordable housing and opportunities to expand inclusive neighborhoods (see Figure 9.25).**

**921.15**

**921.16**

**Figure 9.26: Zoning Height and Street Width 921.16**

